

---

This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

<http://books.google.com>



# TRAMMELINGS

A decorative frame surrounding the title and author's name. It features a central rectangular area supported by two columns with classical capitals. The frame is topped by a decorative pediment and flanked by two tall, slender columns with decorative finials. The entire design is rendered in a simple line-art style.

G. P.  
CURTIS









# TRAMMELINGS

And Other Stories

BY

GEORGINA PELL CURTIS

Editor of "*Some Roads to Rome in America*".

---

ST. LOUIS, MO., 1909.

PUBLISHED BY B. HERDER

17 SOUTH BROADWAY

FREIBURG, (BADEN)  
B. HERDER

LONDON AND EDINBURGH  
SANDS & CO.

**COPYRIGHT 1909**

**BY**

**JOSEPH GUMMERSBACH**

**TO THE BELOVED MEMORY  
OF THE ONE  
WHO FIRST INSPIRED MY PEN,  
M. McM.**



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

These stories first appeared in different Magazines:—The Messenger, the Messenger of the Sacred Heart, The Ave Maria, the Catholic World, the Magnificat, the Rosary, and Donahoe's. They are now, with the permission of the different editors, published in book form.

The author has been asked many times if the character of old Santos is drawn from life, and she takes this opportunity to say that during a year spent on a ranch in the hill country north of San Antonio, she met the original of Santos, a very old Mexican. The stories, however, are the Author's own creation, to which the picturesque country lent color.

*Chicago, Ill., October, 1909.*





## CONTENTS.

---

Trammelings.....	1
Castle Walls.....	35
A Romance of the Guadalupe.....	83
A Romance of the San Rafael Canon.....	96
The Christ Child of Norumbega.....	115
✓ The Sign of Orion.....	137
Catarina.....	151
A Little Child Shall Lead Them.....	169
The Vow of Tir-na-N'oge.....	189
The Love Gift.....	213
A Modern Utopia.....	234
Gabrielle.....	261
The Quest of Magdalena.....	291
Ramon.....	315
Conchita.....	335
The Story of Santos.....	352
In Paradisum.....	367
"One of the Least".....	381
The Bells of San Juan Capistrano.....	391
A Story of the Holy Vase.....	406
Valentine.....	424
A Madonna of the Casa Grande.....	444
The Strife Obscure.....	479
An Episode of the Present Struggle in France.....	528
The Waters of Trembling.....	545
Azrael.....	576



# TRAMMELINGS

## CHAPTER I.

"Knowledge we are not foes;  
I seek thee diligently;  
But the world with a great wind blows,  
Shining, and not from thee.  
Blowing to beautiful things  
On amid dark and light,  
Till life with the trammelings  
Of laws that are not the right,  
Breaks pure and clear, and sings  
Glorying to God in the height."

EURIPIDES.

"This way, Monsieur et Madame." The young nun half turned as she spoke, smiling on the dark gentleman and sweet-looking lady who were following her down the long corridor toward one of the children's wards in a Foundling Asylum of Belgium.

It was an almost daily occurrence for Soeur Stephanie to show visitors over the different wards; but it seemed to her that afternoon as if there was something exceptional in the bearing and refinement of the husband and wife who had come there to adopt one of the foundling boys. Not French or Belganese thought Soeur Stephanie, though they spoke French fluently; but English, or, perhaps, American—the

world that lay beyond her convent walls was wide. She opened the door at the end of the corridor and stood aside to let her guests pass in.

"Oh, the darlings!" said the lady, involuntarily, and the little sister smiled. Here was the real mother love, she thought; it would be well for the little one that this lady selected from their flock.

A long, sunny room stretched out before them. Plants were blooming in the windows, and two young nuns were tending a motly crowd of boys, ranging in ages from seven years down to two-year-old toddlers who had just learned to walk. Several of the children came running up to the little group that stood near the door. One fair-haired, blue-eyed boy of about three clutched the lady's skirts and looked up at her with enchanting smiles.

"Take me with you," he said in baby French.

"Oh, the darlings!" said the lady again, and getting down on her knees, she drew first one and then another to her and commenced talking to them, her sweet voice soon attracting other children, until she had a little crowd pressing close around her. Her husband had meanwhile been walking around the room, and presently he returned.

"Have you seen any child you would like to have, Margaret?" he said.

"I hardly know," was the answer. "This blue-

eyed darling is so lovely, and so is this one, and this one," pointing out first one and then another.

Her husband laughed. "I believe you would like to take home a dozen," he said; "but I think we agreed on only one till we saw how the experiment turned out, and we have not much time; our train leaves at ten o'clock to-night."

"Oh!" and the lady sighed. Could she ever choose! She arose from her position on the floor and commenced walking around the room. There were about fifty boys present, some of them with distinct marks of hereditary refinement. The lady's eyes filled with tears. Childless she was, and would ever be; and to think that some women had so sullied the glory of their motherhood as to abandon their offspring. First one and then another child was brought up by Soeur Stephanie. Questions were answered, and the child's history, when known, was given.

"I really think," said the lady, turning her bright face to her husband's fine dark one, "that I will take this boy." As she spoke she drew forward the blue-eyed, fair-haired child who had so attracted her by clutching her skirts and asking to be taken with her.

"Please yourself, my dear," said the gentleman, amiably. "Number 641," said Soeur Stephanie, consulting her records, "baptized Antoine; left here



when one year old by his mother, a French governess."

"Of gentle birth?" asked the lady.

"Undoubtedly, from all we learned," was the answer.

Little Antoine was babbling away to the lady—a pretty child, certainly, and amiable; perhaps not much trouble to rear.

The lady arose, and still holding Antoine's hand, turned to the Sister.

"I would like to see the Mother Superior," she said. Can the child come with me? Ah!"

The exclamation was so sudden that the little Sister started; even the gentleman turned in surprise, unused to such quickness of tone in his wife.

But she had dropped Antoine's hand and was bending down to speak to a child who stood alone, almost hiding behind a chair that her dress had brushed in passing.

Walking across the room toward the door, Antoine clinging to her hand, Margaret Dalrymple had caught sight of a boy about five, who, safe behind a high chair, had peeped shyly out at her as she passed.

What was it in the little face that had arrested her? Not a handsome child, compared to some of the others, but with wonderful brown eyes. Eyes that

had looked up at her as if from a spiritual depth of neglected, half-starved babyhood.

"Take me, and love me," they seemed to say.

"Oh! that child," said Soeur Stephanie, who had come up behind them. "He is one of the worst boys here, Madame. A terrible temper. *Ciell* but we are all afraid of Armand."

But Margaret Dalrymple had made up her mind.

"I shall take this boy," she said. "I am not afraid. I was not sure of little Antoine; but I know I want this one. What is his history, Sister?"

"Number 364," answered Soeur Stephanie, mechanically, "baptized Armand. Left here at the door in a basket when one week old."

"And you know no more than that?" asked the lady.

"Nothing, Madame. He is a bright boy; but his temper!" And Sister Stephanie looked what she would not say.

"Are you sure you are wise, Margaret?" asked her husband.

"Quite sure," she answered with a smile. The lean little brown hand was holding fast to hers, and the child's magnificent dark eyes were riveted on the fair face that had already begun to study him. Yes, here was no ordinary child. The shape of the head and brow, the slender hands, the firm little chin, all spoke of power for evil or good.

Antoine had turned away indifferent, and in half an hour the necessary formalities having been gone through with, little Armand was driving away from the only home he had ever known with his new mother.

. . . . .  
At ten o'clock that night they were steaming southward. Long after midnight when Armand was asleep, Margaret Dalrymple bent over him in a passion of new born love and delight. This child was to be hers, all hers—to love and to be loved by—and to train for God.

## CHAPTER II.

"Knowledge, we are not foes—  
I seek thee diligently."

"THE Superintendent wants to speak to you as soon as you have made your rounds, Dalrymple. He is waiting for you in the office."

The young medical student who had paused for a moment to deliver his message hurried on down the long ward of the—— Hospital in London.

Dr. Armand Dalrymple arose from his seat by the bedside of the last of his patients in the crowded ward, and saying a few words to the nurse, turned in the opposite direction from that taken by his friend

Brune, and was soon on the elevator, descending to the lower floor.

Alighting from the lift, he walked with firm, even tread across one of the marble halls in the direction of the Superintendent's office.

"I think you are wanted on an urgent case, Dalrymple," said a friend whom he met in the corridor. "Some big bug has wired from France for a physician."

"I am ready," said Dalrymple, as he hurried on. Such calls for one of the most famous surgeons in London were of frequent occurrence.

Meeting the head nurse, he paused for a second to give her some directions about a patient who was in a critical condition. The nurse watched him for a moment ere he disappeared in the superintendent's office, noting his fine face, the look of power about the head, the keen, dark eyes, the strong, scientific looking hands, and the well-built figure, that suggested both strength and coolness in its white hospital attire.

Margaret Dalrymple's intuition about the founding she had adopted had been verified. Passionate the boy was—subject at times to storms of anger; but never to mean or dishonorable actions. Capable of an intensity of devotion, he had from the first loved his adopted mother with all his heart. In

time the fiery temper grew less difficult to control; for the boy was ruled by love, and there came a day when he would have died rather than cause Margaret pain. Leaving Belgium, his foster-parents had proceeded at once to their home in Scotland, and here Armand grew up. In winter they lived in Edinburgh, where he went to school. In summer their home was among the Scotch mountains and lakes sacred to the memory of the loyal Catholics who fought for Prince Charlie and his losing cause. Descended from one of these families, the Dalrymples had trained the boy in all the most loyal traditions of that lost and glorious cause.

From the first Armand had responded eagerly to every avenue of instruction opened to him. The boy had a passionate thirst for knowledge. Something of the wild, rugged grandeur of the Scotch mountains and moorlands, with the outward calm, the sunshine and shade of the lakes, seemed to enter into his character. When at twenty he came back from finishing his education at a foreign university, and announced that he would like to study for the profession of a physician, Margaret Dalrymple was not surprised. "It is what he is fitted for," she told her husband. "He has the brain, the hand, the physical endurance—above all, the strength and tenderness of character for such a life."

So Armand went to Paris and worked for five years in its hospitals, with brief visits to the home and mother he adored, and to the father who was already proud that the adopted son bore his name. Then came the news that John Dalrymple had died quite suddenly. Armand was for leaving his work, and everything, to stay with the mother; but she refused.

"No, my boy," she said, during his brief visit. "You must go back to your work. I shall stay here with Robert and Jeanne, who will take good care of me. Some day, please God, Armand, we will have a home together."

But that time never came. The winter following, the failure of some great landed concern, in which the elder Dalrymple had invested almost all his money, left Margaret almost a beggar, and the shock, acting on advanced years, and delicate health, killed her. Armand arrived in time to receive her blessing, to encircle her with his strong, protecting love, and to go, as it were, to the gates of eternity with the woman who had given him everything in his life.

When the funeral was over he returned to the home that seemed so desolate without the fair, gracious presence, and sat down to consider the future. The house was his, and a slender sum, about forty pounds a year, all that had been saved from



the income that the Dalrymples had hoped to leave their adopted son.

The money, he decided, must go to keep up the place, and to support Robert and Jeanne, who had lived in the family for over forty years. They could stay there and take care of the house as long as they lived. As to him, he had youth, health and knowledge to help him in his battle with the world. So he returned to Paris, and in a few months obtained an appointment as surgeon in a celebrated London hospital. Already his fame and his skill in performing operations was becoming world-wide.

He had been in the London hospital three years and now was nearly thirty years old, when he was sent for that June morning to the superintendent's office.

"Ah! Dalrymple," was the greeting, as he entered. 'Can you be ready to leave for Calais by the boat to-night? The Prince de F. has wired from his estate near Fontainebleau, asking you to come to him at once and perform a very difficult and dangerous operation, which the Paris doctors say is absolutely necessary. This operation is your specialty, and the Prince will have no one but you.'

"I am ready," said the young surgeon quietly. He sat down as he spoke, and the superintendent entered into a detailed account of the case. The

Paris doctor, who had wired all particulars, had laid stress on the fact that there was no time to lose.

The necessary arrangements were soon completed, and at six o'clock that night Doctor Armand Dalrymple went on board the boat at Dover that was to take him across the Channel to Calais.

### CHAPTER III.

"The world with a great wind blows,  
Shining, and not from thee.  
Blowing to beautiful things,  
On amid dark and light."

The estate of the Prince de F. comprised a magnificent property not far from Fontainebleau. Arriving dusty and travel-stained from his rapid journey, which had admitted of no delay after disembarking at Calais, Armand Dalrymple was met by his confrere, a surgeon from the hospital in Paris where he had worked for over five years before going to London. Driving rapidly from the station the two surgeons had yet time to go over the case, and when they drew up under the porte cochere of the splendid chateau the young English doctor felt he had all the facts of the case well in hand.

"We are all ready for you, said the French surgeon. "An operating room is prepared; two trained

nurses are in attendance, and I and my assistant will be here to help you."

"What about the Prince's condition," inquired Dalrymple; "is he nervous?"

"He has been," was the answer; "though not naturally of a nervous physique; but his suffering has been so great that we have him under the influence of anodynes most of the time. He probably will not notice you."

"I will go to him at once," said Dalrymple, "as soon as I have washed and changed my clothes. The operation had better take place as quickly as possible."

"You are ready?" said the French surgeon; "and after such hurried travel. Your hand, *mon ami*, is it steady? *Ciel!* what nerve."

For Armand, who was by this time in the suite of rooms that had been prepared for him, had held up a glass filled to the very brim with water. Holding it at arm's length for a moment, during which not a drop had been spilled, he put it down and smiled.

"I fancy my hand is as steady as it ever will be," he said.

Half an hour later he was bending over his patient with no thought but that here was a life that must be saved if possible. His examination was soon made, and he turned from the sick man to look at his watch.

"As soon as you can have your patient ready, Nurse," he said, "he had better be moved to the operating room. I think one hour's time is all I shall need."

The nurse assented, and marvelled. How calm the English doctor was, and there was but one chance in a hundred of saving the Prince's life.

. . . . .  
The sun was moving westward in golden splendor over the dark forest of Fontainebleau when the young surgeon looked up at the little circle that for over an hour had followed him breathlessly. Twice the fluttering of the Prince's pulse made them fear the heart action would cease. Twice the nurses, used as they were to such scenes, blanched with fear, while the French surgeon almost uttered an exclamation. Now the last stitch had been taken, the bandaging was done, and motionless, deathlike, the Prince was taken back to his room to await the passing off of the effects of the ether.

"I think he will do now," said Dalrymple, quietly.

"*Mon Dieu!*" said the Frenchman, "it was splendid, *magnifique*; not one in a thousand could have done it."

"Thank you," said Dalrymple, holding out his hand; "and now, St. Laurent, I am desperately hungry. Shall we go downstairs?"

The Prince, who was a widower, lived alone; but his housekeeper had anticipated their wants, and leaving their patient in the nurse's hands, the two men dined together, their meal being served in the great dining room of the chateau, which looked out on a magnificent park. In the distance was a glimpse of the forests of Fontainebleau.

"Is there no one to inherit this splendid place?" asked Dalrymple.

"A distant cousin, whom the Prince hates," answered St. Laurent. "The Prince's two sons died young, and his wife, also, has been dead many years."

After the meal was over, the report from the sick room being that the Prince had not yet come out of the ether, the two men wandered out on the broad terrace in front of the chateau; till nearly dusk they sat there talking, chiefly professional talk, till Dalrymple arose.

"I must go to my patient, St. Laurent," he said. "I will stay here three days, or, perhaps, a week. At the end of that time if no complications arise I think the Prince will be out of danger, and I can leave him in your hands."

"I must return to Paris to-night," was the answer. "Wire me when you must leave, Dalrymple, and I will come back to attend the case."

The two men shook hands and parted. Midnight

found Dalrymple in charge of the sick room. The Prince was resting quietly, and taking up a book, Dalrymple sat down near a shaded lamp, out of range of the bed where the Prince lay.

He had read for perhaps an hour when there was a sound, the faintest, from the patient. Noiselessly the young surgeon walked over to the bed. It was not quite time to take the Prince's temperature; but Dalrymple sat down by him, observing his breathing and with fingers laid lightly on his pulse. It was a handsome face on which his eye rested. The Prince was a tall man of about seventy, with silvery hair, and fine aquiline nose. "He must have had a splendid physique in his youth," thought Dalrymple. "I suppose that is why he lived through his ordeal."

The sick man stirred again and opened his eyes. Then in a low voice, to the surgeon's surprise, came in English the words.

"Great God!"

He seemed alarmingly agitated. Used to the after effects of ether, the young surgeon hastened to speak. He must be quieted and soothed at all costs. Any excitement would bring on fever.

"I am your doctor from London," he said. "You are safely past your operation, Monsieur le Prince, and doing well. Now rest and sleep. In a few days



you will feel like another man." But the Prince shuddered and his already pale face was livid. Was he under some hallucination?

Seriously alarmed Dalrymple turned away and commenced pouring out a quieting draught.

He felt, rather than saw, that the sick man followed his every movement. The Prince's physique had not prepared him for such a nervous patient.

The medicine seemed to have its effect, or else the Prince had regained his mental balance. Presently his eyes closed, his breathing became more regular, and with a sigh of relief Dalrymple sat down near him for the rest of the night and until one of the nurses relieved him at five o'clock, he did not go out of sight of his patient.

At daybreak, seeing that all was well, he retired to his room for several hours of needed rest and sleep.

. . . . .  
A week later he pronounced his patient out of danger and came to bid him goodbye. The Prince was still lying on his back, but with the prospect of rapid recovery. "I owe you my life," he said, "and I shall not forget it."

His blue eyes, under their heavy beetling brows, looked keenly at the younger man, and as the door closed after him he rang for his secretary. The nurse was in an ante-room when the ring was answered.

"Brabant," said the Prince, speaking low, "you are a fool; you always were a fool; but perhaps you can follow that English doctor to London. Find out all his history, where he was born, his antecedents—everything about him—and don't come back until you have an answer to all these questions, and, above all, don't let the man know what you are doing."

"Yes, Monsieur le Prince," said Brabant, obediently.

#### CHAPTER IV.

"Life with the trammelings,  
Of laws that are not the right."

THE return trip across the Channel had been made in safety, and now Armand Dalrymple was on the train speeding towards London. At the station next beyond Dover the guard opened the door of the compartment which, so far, Armand had had to himself, and admitted three passengers, an elderly gentleman and lady, and a young girl of perhaps twenty-three. It was a lovely face that met the young surgeon's gaze—blue of eye, dark of hair, with an expression of sweetness and animation that would have held his attention had he not felt it would be rude to stare.

"Please give me my book, Virginia," said the lady. "I think it is in the bottom of the small bag."

"Irish," thought Armand, "and of the loviest type—and what a voice!" For the girl was talking and laughing in tones whose refined, musical cadence charmed Armand Dalrymple's every sense, the while his trained ear had instantly recognized the girl's use of the finest Dublin English.

He returned to his newspaper; but snatches of conversation continued to reach him, and although the paper was still held in his hands, it received scant attention. "We shall be in London soon, now," thought Armand. "I wonder where they are going."

Even as the thought passed through his mind, there was a sudden and tremendous crash; he felt himself pitched forward against the partition. Then came a confused sense of the sound of escaping steam and splintered wood, of cries and groans, of agonizing pain in his right arm, and a momentary sense of faintness; then, with a supreme effort, he rallied his will and senses, and found he was able to get up, though the car was lying on its side, badly shattered, and its forward end seemed to have partly telescoped the car ahead. Climbing over the wreck of seats, broken glass, and splintered wood, Armand found what he sought. The young girl was partly pinned down under a mass of debris; but one hand moved,

and the young surgeon, with almost superhuman effort, commenced the task of extricating her. Just as she was nearly free, there was a confusion of voices, and the next moment dozens of willing hands were at work clearing a way for those who were unhurt, and assisting those who were injured.

"Here, someone, take this lady," called the young surgeon, "and come help me find her father and mother." There was an instant and willing response. "There were only two other passengers in this compartment," said Dalrymple. "Ah," and he turned away shuddering, "there they are."

His practiced eye had shown him at once that the father and mother had met instant death. He remained to see that they were extricated from the wreck and carried to a nearby station where others had been laid before them, then hurried off to find the young girl.

All around was a scene of indescribable horror and confusion. An open switch had sent nearly the whole train off the track. Those in the rear car had escaped unhurt, and were lending all the assistance they could to their less fortunate fellow passengers.

Dalrymple hastened forward, anxious not only to find the young girl, but to lend all the help he could to the injured. Fortunately as he was leaving the little station, a relief train arrived and doctors

and nurses sprang out before the train was barely at a standstill, so he felt relieved of one pressing aspect of the case.

"Be you the lady's brother?" said a voice at his side, and turning quickly, Dalrymple recognized the rough but kindly countryman to whom he had handed the young girl, Virginia.

"Take me to her at once, please," was his answer, and in a few seconds he was kneeling by the side of the now fully conscious girl.

"Oh, sir," she said, and he saw by her look and tone that he was recognized "you were in our coach. Have you seen my father and mother?"

"They were taken out after you were," he replied, evasively, "and are in the station. I am a surgeon," he added, soothingly, as if speaking to a child.

There was apparently no external, and probably no internal injury. As far as he could see she was suffering simply from shock. At last he stood up, his examination completed.

"I think you are unhurt," he said. "Of course you are weak from the terrible shock, but only time can cure that." The girl arose, steadying herself by laying a hand on a nearby railing.

"Oh! then," she said, with a little gesture of appeal, "I must go at once to my father and mother. Please show me the way."

Something in the strong, pitying face, bent toward her, told her all that the man could not say. With a little cry she reached out blindly, then he caught her just as she fainted.

“I have no one in the world,” she said, “but an old aunt who lives a few miles out of Dublin. My own home is near hers.”

Her name, she told Armand, was Virginia Nugent. She would go to her aunt, Miss O'Neill, at once.

“I will go with you,” he said; and he did, making all necessary arrangements for the forwarding of her parents' bodies, and doing everything for her comfort that tact and kindness could suggest.

The young girl herself seemed stunned, and it was not until she was in the arms of the aged aunt, to whom she had told Armand she was united by the closest ties, that the magnitude of her loss seemed to come home to her, and she broke down and wept. The sight of her tears relieved Dalrymple, who had begun to fear that the strain would be too much for her.

A few hours after placing her in her aunt's care he was back in London, obliged at last to pay some attention to his own wounded arm—the pain of which had now become almost unbearable.

## CHAPTER V.

"Till life with the trammelings,  
Of laws that are not the right,  
Breaks pure and clear and sings,  
Glorying to God in the height."

"This is very serious, indeed," said the surgeon. "You have waited too long; there are indisputable indications of blood poison."

"So I feared," answered Dalrymple.

He was in the examining room of his own hospital, surrounded by several surgeons, all of them his friends.

"I would like one more opinion before I decide what is to be done," said the surgeon who had first spoken. "I will telephone for —."

In half an hour Dalrymple had heard the worst. The chances of saving his life were only one in a thousand unless his arm was immediately amputated.

His right arm! The man was brave; but he shuddered and trembled. A vista of years opened before him; his career as a surgeon at an end. All the great things he had hoped to achieve were to fade as a dream. His work perhaps that of a small general practitioner. Oh, the irony of it! The great surgeon who had pronounced the verdict, an intimate friend of his, had almost broken down; but Armand himself had remained calm.

"I will have the operation at once," he had said, and then he held out his uninjured left arm and smiled—the smile of the boy whom Margaret Dalrymple had recognized by divine intuition for all he was worth—and shook the great surgeon's hand.

"Thank you——," he said. "I know you will do the best you can for me."

"God bless you, Dalrymple," was the answer. "You are a brave man."

. . . . .  
"I waited in London till after the operation, Monsieur le Prince, then I went to Belgium. The operation was successful, and before I left they said Monsieur Dalrymple would recover, though with the loss of his right arm."

"*Mon Dieu!*" said the Prince, who was visibly excited by the long story his secretary had just been telling him, "such skill, such nerve, and to think his operation on me was his last!"

This, indeed, was the absorbing topic of conversation in the English and Continental social and medical world for some time to come.

That a man so young, but already at the zenith of his fame, should have met with such a terrible cutting short of his surgical career, aroused universal interest and sympathy.

Meanwhile the Prince progressed rapidly towards



recovery. In another month he was well. Sitting one afternoon in the library that overlooked part of his magnificent estate, he came out of a week of irritability and taciturnity that had sorely tried the patience of both valet and secretary with a cleared brow and eyes that sparkled.

"I'll do it," he said. "It will be a nine-days' wonder, and will stir all Europe; but that fellow, Emile, who is waiting to jump into my shoes will get his conge." Then the Prince rang for his secretary.

"Brabant," he said, "get ready to start for London with me to-morrow. Wire for rooms and make all necessary arrangements to go by the morning train."

"But, Monsieur le Prince," said Brabant, "you forget Monsieur's health."

"A fiddlesticks for health, Brabant," said the Prince, with renewed irritation, rapping the floor with his stick as he spoke. "I am going; all you have to do is to get ready."

"Yes, Monsieur le Prince," said Brabant meekly. Then he retired to wire to the French surgeon; but in spite of doctors and nurses the Prince, who had all his life done pretty much as he pleased, started for London the next day.

. . . . .  
"What an execrable journey," said the Prince, "and this place—it is No-Man's land."

"Yes, Monsieur le Prince," said Brabant.

The Prince turned sharply. "You are a fool, Brabant," he said contemptuously. "Don't you see the scenery is magnificent; and the air! *Mon Dieu*, it is like champagne."

"Yes, Monsieur le Prince," said Brabant again.

Words failed the Prince. A man who acquiesced in all you said, however contradictory your statements might be, was hopeless.

If the Prince was irritable, the secretary was tired. Of what avail this race to Scotland after a one-armed surgeon, who as a surgeon was henceforth useless? His master was not in the habit of chasing after anyone this way! Arriving in London the day previous they had learned that Dalrymple had left three days ago for his home in Scotland. Nothing would do but that the Prince must follow at once. In vain Brabant suggested a night's rest in the city. The Prince was determined, and they had taken the night mail for Scotland, had changed to the little station nearest Dalrymple's home, and now were bumping over a very uneven road in a very medieval hack, the best the place afforded. The hangings of the conveyance smelled damp; the Prince felt twinges of rheumatism, and he had had little sleep the night before. No wonder his nerves were unstrung. He leaned back and closed his eyes, then opened them with a start.

"I think we have arrived, Monsieur le Prince," said Brabant. "Look, there is Monsieur le Docteur's house." Even as he spoke the hack had rattled up to the door. Brabant alighted and helped his master down. The Prince leaned heavily on him while looking around with some signs of interest. The house, well and solidly built, stood on an eminence that commanded a magnificent view of mountains and lake. The air was glorious. An old-fashioned garden, bright with flowers, led down to the road. Blue smoke curled upward from the tall chimney and was lost in the bluer ether above. Everywhere was an atmosphere of silence and peace.

The Prince sighed, then turned as the house door opened and a tall old man, dressed as a Highland gillie, stepped forward.

Yes, Dr. Dalrymple lived here; he was at home and would be pleased to see his guest. The Prince entered a room that was just as Margaret Dalrymple had left it. On a large open fireplace some logs were burning. The ceiling, of heavy beams, was black with age. The small diamond panes of the windows let in a view that was enchantment. About the whole room, with its books and silver lamps, its old-fashioned furniture and pictures, was an air of refinement and solid comfort. Jeanne had certainly fulfilled her trust of keeping the place in good order.

The Prince sighed again. So it was here the boy had grown up instead of in his own magnificent chateau. Well, it might have been worse. The door opened and Armand Dalrymple paused on the threshold, overcome by astonishment. The Prince had given no name, and here to the bewildered gaze of the young surgeon, still pale from illness and shock, stood a man whom he had supposed was still living as a semi-invalid in France, some hundreds of miles away. He advanced into the room, native courtesy and hospitality on his own heath dominant.

"Monsieur le Prince," he said, "this is an honor; but I am concerned to see you at the end of such a journey; and surely you know"—touching his empty sleeve with his left hand—"surely you know I can do nothing more for you professionally."

The Prince was near to choking. Excitement, fatigue, the pathetic sight of the dark pale face and empty sleeve were all telling on him; but he had an iron will, and pulled himself together with a mighty effort.

"With your leave, Monsieur," he said, "I will send my secretary outside. I have come this long journey to see you on a matter of vital importance, and I would prefer to see you alone."

"Certainly," said Dalrymple. Then with his habitual kindness and courtesy he turned to the

secretary and asked him if he would like to go over the glebe with Robert. Brabant murmured an indistinct assent, and presently the tall old Scotchman appeared and the two departed together. As they disappeared Dalrymple turned to his guest after closing the door.

"With your leave," said the Prince, "we will converse in French, although this place seems lonely, walls have ears."

"By all means," answered Dalrymple. What could the old man have to say?

The Prince moved in his chair uneasily.

"You are not comfortable," said the younger man; and he placed a cushion behind the Prince, and brought a bench for his feet. "Let me ring for Jeanne," he said. "You should have some wine, Sir—or is there anything else I can give you?"

But the Prince waved his hand, so Armand sat down. "I am ready," he said, kindly, "and you?"

"*Mon Dieu!*" groaned the Prince. "Where shall I begin?" Then he straightened up in his chair, his keen blue eyes fixed on Armand's dark ones, his fine aquiline features against their back-ground of dark mahogany looking like delicate carved ivory; his handsome head held erect and proud, as if to defy the moment of weakness just past. So he sat for several seconds ere he spoke. The silence was un-

broken until the clock ticked three. This, the hour of Peter's denial, was the hour of the Prince's acknowledgment.

"Armand Dalrymple," he said, "You wonder to see me here. I have journeyed from France to Scotland to make reparation—to tell you"—the Prince's pale face grew paler, and he spoke slowly—"to tell you—that you—are—my son."

Every trace of color left Armand's face, but he did not speak.

"Listen!" said the Prince. "You are the heir to my name and estates. Your mother was my second wife, though never openly acknowledged. Then, too, she died when you were born."

"Who was she—" asked Armand, hoarsely—"my mother?"

"She was an English girl," answered the Prince, "living in Belgium as governess in a noble family. I met her there soon after my first wife died. *Mon Dieu!* she was beautiful, and so pious. You are like her," he added, "in looks, and, if I mistake not, in piety." There was a note that sounded not unlike sarcasm in the old man's voice.

"Great God!" said Armand, "and you left me in a foundling asylum! How was that Monsieur le Prince, if I was your legitimate son?"

The Prince shifted uneasily in his chair.

"At that time," he said—and there was a note of pride in his voice—"my two sons by my first wife were living. To have acknowledged another marriage which had been unknown to my sovereign would have brought about disastrous complications at the time."

"But," asked Armand, "was it necessary to cast me off to the care of charity?"

The Prince shrugged his shoulders. Here was a man whose idea of right and wrong did not tally with the ways of his—the Prince's world. Was it his Scotch bringing up, or was it the spirit, reproduced in her son, of his young English wife, whose heart he had broken? Perhaps it was both. Heredity and environment had moulded Armand; and the only quality he had received from the Prince was a pride that made him revolt against acknowledging relationship to such a man.

Nevertheless, he must listen; and long the Prince talked, relating all the circumstances of his marriage—of his second wife's history, of Armand's birth, and of the fact that he had recognized him after the operation by his wonderful likeness to his mother.

"I owe you my life," said the Prince, "and when I found out through Brabant that you were my son, I swore I would acknowledge you, and leave you my entire fortune."

"Never," said Armand.

"What!" almost screamed the Prince, starting from his chair, "you refuse to let me acknowledge you, and make you my heir?"

"Monsieur le Prince," said the young doctor, quietly, "I am indebted to you for one thing—for letting me know my mother was above reproach; my birth without a stain. Beyond that I owe you nothing. My real existence—all that I knew of a mother's tenderness, of a father's protection, of love, honor, life—have been here; therefore my choice is to remain here, to be known by the name of my foster-parents, a name I am more proud to bear than I would be of any title you could give me."

"*Mon Dieu!*" said the Prince, "are you mad? Do you know that as my son you are related to half the reigning families of Europe; and you dare refuse my name for a paltry Scotch one!"

"Yes," said Armand, "I must refuse, and from the fullest conviction that my choice is the right one; the one in which my heart and spirit will be free."

The Prince was leaning back breathing hard. Here was an element undreamed of in his cynical and worldly life. The desire to acknowledge Armand as his heir had first been born of a wish to outwit and disappoint his cousin, Emile. But Armand's personality, his dark, handsome face; the spirit that



bade him refuse the splendid future offered him, were combining to awaken in the old Prince's selfish heart some hitherto unknown gnawings of remorse and pain. Here, indeed, was a son to lean on and be proud of. Why had he been such a fool as to abandon him in his babyhood? In the depths of his disappointment the Prince groaned. Could he not make one last appeal? He turned to the young man, whose face showed plainly that he, too, was suffering, and involuntarily laid a hand on the left arm that happened to be nearest him.

"Listen, *Mon Ami*," he said; "think twice before you reject me finally. I am an old man. I shall not live long. When I am gone my wealth will open to you splendid opportunities. You think your career is over; but, man, it is just begun. Your opinion, your scientific gifts, can make you the greatest medical authority in Europe. You can no longer operate, 'tis true, but you can do more. My wealth will open to you whole avenues that now are closed. You can found hospitals, and easily become the greatest consulting surgeon in Europe with my money to back you up. The name of the Prince Doctor will go down to the ages——"

"I have thought of all that," said Armand, "and my decision is unchanged. And now, Monsieur le Prince, I think there is nothing more for us to say. Had I not better ring for your secretary?"

"Do," said the Prince, falling back in his chair.

"You must not leave without rest and refreshment," said Armand, courteously. "I will ring for my housekeeper." But the old Prince arose. Now that his mission had failed, he was in a hurry to be gone. There was just time to make connections with the night mail for London.

His leave-taking of Armand was brief; this strange new feeling of intolerable remorse was growing within him. Let him get away from those sad brown eyes, so like other eyes which had haunted him for a time thirty years ago; once back at Fontainebleau, it would be easier to forget!"

"Brabant," he said, as they drove rapidly toward the station—"Brabant, that man is a fool or a knave, or perhaps neither."

"Yes, Monsieur le Prince," answered Brabant, obediently.

. . . . .  
"The world would have called it a sacrifice, Virginia."

The young wife turned her lovely face to the speaker.

"I understand," she said. "But it was not so, Armand; your choice left your spirit free; for the rest, all honor and renown that the Prince dreamed of has come to you—but not through him."

For a moment they paused, then hand in hand they walked across the moorland, treading the purple heather under foot.

Farther down through cloud and sunshine and mist lay a glorious vision of lake and hillside and glebe, where stood the home to which Armand Dalrymple had come in his outcast, lonely babyhood. Overhead a lark began to sing, freely, gaily, purely, and involuntarily Armand and Virginia took up his song. The bird winged its way higher and higher in the morning sun.

"Glory to God in the highest," it seemed to sing:  
"Glory to God—to God in the highest."

Onward and upward it flew, till bird and song were lost in the blue eternal space.

## CASTLE WALLS.

THE overhanging branches of a mighty cypress sheltered them from the hot August sun; its long limbs, covered with dark, glistening leaves, spread outward over the cliff, making a cool and shady retreat.

High above them rose the castle, mighty in its strength, while southward the cliffs formed almost a sheer descent to the valley below. Eastward, from their high elevation, could be caught a glimmer of the far-off blue of the Mediterranean Sea.

The boy, although on Spanish soil, was singing in English the first verse of Tennyson's "Bugle Song," his sister accompanying him with low, soft notes from a silver bugle of surpassing sweetness.

The boy's clear tenor voice rose above the mellow sound of the bugle, as he sang:

"The splendor falls on castle walls,  
And snowy summits old in story.  
The long light shakes across the lakes,  
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.  
Blow, bugle, blow; set the wild echoes flying.  
Blow, bugle, blow; answer echoes, dying, dying,  
dying."

With exquisite skill the girl kept time to the words,

and as the last faint sound from the bugle echoed on the air, she handed it to the boy, and commenced to sing the second verse of the song; her brother blowing on the bugle louder than she had done, so that it seemed to blend with her sweet soprano voice, and become a part of it:

“Oh, hark, O hear how thin and clear,  
And thinner, clearer, farther going!  
O sweet and far, from cliff and scar  
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!  
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying—  
Blow, bugle; answer echoes, dying, dying,  
dying.”

There was scarcely a pause ere the last verse was taken up in a rich, mournful contralto voice, the girl now accompanying the song with a flute, while the boy continued to blow soft notes from his silver bugle:

“O love, they die in yon rich sky,  
They faint on hill or field or river;  
Our echoes roll from soul to soul  
And grow forever and forever.  
Blow, bugle; blow, set the wild echoes flying.  
And answer echoes, answer, dying, dying,  
dying.”

There was a passionate longing in this one's rendering of the verse, different from the clear, joyous voices that had preceded it. As the last sound died

on the air, something like a sob was heard, and the boy threw down his bugle and crossed to where the singer sat, a few feet from the edge of the cliff, leaning against the trunk of the tree.

"It has been too much for you, *Madre!*" he exclaimed. "Dulce said she knew it would be."

The girl had come up and wound her arms affectionately around her mother.

"I am glad it is over," she sighed. "Now not for another year, *Madre mia*, will we hear that song, beautiful as it is."

"I would not miss it," answered the lady. "From the time you and Claro were tiny children we have sung it here every year. Some day your father may come back and recognize it."

The girl glanced at her brother, tender pity in her bright young face. The boy elevated his delicate brows; perhaps he felt almost as near to tears as his twin sister, but it behooved him as a man, and the head of his ancient house, not to show any sign of weakness.

A step on the grass near them broke the stillness, and the mother and her children turned.

Visitors coming on foot to that far-off castle, high up among the mountains of the most northeastern part of Spain, were rare. The footsteps drew nearer, and presently a man came in sight—a gentleman,

unmistakably, though he was dusty and tired—and a knapsack was slung over one shoulder. Seeing the ladies, he removed his hat and bowed.

“Pardon me, senoras, he said. “I could not help hearing your song as I came up the mountain, so I know you understand English. It must explain my trespass on your courtesy.”

“You are welcome,” said the elder lady cordially and in excellent English. “We were just about to return to the *casa*; will you not come with us, Senor—?”

“Heathcote,” said the other, as if anticipating her desire to know his name; “George Heathcote, Senora, of Devonshire, England. Now on a walking tour through Spain, which is my mother’s country.”

“Ah!”—and the lady’s interest was evident—“so you are half Spanish, Senor!”

“My mother was a native of Barcelona,” was the answer. “I am now on my way from there, intending to cross the Pyrenees, and join my family, who are at Pau.”

As they wound up the road to the castle, the conversation became animated. He had slept the night before at Rosas, the newcomer told them, a quaint little town near the coast. He was enthusiastic about the country, the people, and the glorious scenery of Spain.

They soon reached the top of the long road that wound up from the valley below; and almost before the senora could ring, the *Portero* had flung open the wide hall door that gave entrance to the castle. The lady turned, her sad, dark eyes full of cordial sweetness:

"Welcome to *Las Rosas*," she said. "It is not often we have the pleasure of welcoming a guest, *senor*."

Inherent Spanish grace made the young man give a sweeping bow ere he answered, with true British frankness:

"You are too kind, *senora*, and I trust I shall not abuse your hospitality." And then, as if remembering the name, "*Las Rosas*," he asked, "Is it part of the little village of Rosas that I left this morning?"

The lady smiled, as if in answer to his frank interest.

"Rosas and the whole country around is ours," she said. "My son is Marques de las Rosas, and this place has been in our family for hundreds of years. If you will come with me I will show you the origin of the name."

She turned from the open hall door as she spoke, and passing down a shallow flight of steps at the left of the castle entrance, walked across a broad courtyard and out of a door that led through an arch be-



yond a massive stone wall enclosing the yard, the young Englishman following her. A few steps beyond the arch she turned.

"Look," she said, indicating the direction with a bend of her head.

The young man uttered an exclamation of genuine surprise and admiration. The whole east wall of the castle was covered with magnificent climbing rose vines. Roses bloomed in the garden on that side of the building—thousands of them, of every known variety—and the air was heavy with their delicious fragrance.

"I thought we had rose gardens in England," said Heathcote, "but I have never seen anything like this. It is wonderful, senora."

"We have been cultivating them for hundreds of years," she answered. "I think there are secrets in grafting and training them known only to us. Our pot-pourri, made from dried rose leaves, is said to be the best in Europe. Then, too," she continued, "the rose is associated with the whole history of our house. One of our ancestors received the Golden Rose from the Pope; and the emblem is entwined in our coat-of-arms."

"It is a beautiful thing, senora," he answered. "Las Rosas will always have a new meaning for me now."

She smiled as she opened a door into the courtyard, and paused a moment before passing through it.

"I am forgetting the duties of a hostess in my interest in our flowers," she said. "You must be tired, *senor*. Come to the *casa*, and I will order a bath and refreshments."

A few seconds later Heathcote was in the grand hall of the castle, and presently found himself ascending a magnificent thirteenth century staircase, preceded by a dignified major domo, to a suite of rooms that had been prepared for his reception. Half an hour later he was ushered into a room that opened on a shaded terrace overlooking the rose garden. Here the Marquesa was presiding at a dainty table, while on the terrace the young son and daughter of the house were playing with a handsome dog.

"We have many English ways here," said the Marquesa, "which we learned from my husband," this in answer to her guest's glance at the tea-table and the dog.

"Your kindness to a stranger, *senora*," said the young man, "is certainly Spanish. In England I am afraid we are not so ready to take people as we find them."

"Perhaps," said the Marquesa, "you are not entirely a stranger. You say your mother was Spanish,

and from Barcelona. Who was she? We have many friends there."

"Her name was Elena Robledo," was the answer. The young girl on the terrace heard, and clapped her hands.

"I do believe, *madre*," she said, "it is the friend of your convent days of whom you so often talk to us."

"But," said the Marquesa, "she is not named Heathcote, *senor*. My friend Elena Robledo married Lord Denison."

"My father, *Senora*. Heathcote is our family name."

"This is indeed delightful," said the Marquesa, cordially. "Your mother, you say, is at Pau? How I should like to see her again and talk over our school days. You must stay with us, *senor*, now that you are here, and I shall write and ask your mother to visit us."

"I fear she could not leave my youngest sister, who is a great invalid, Marquesa," said the young man; "but I shall be only too delighted to accept your kind invitation for myself."

"And your luggage, said the Marquesa, "where can I send for it?"

"I left it all at the inn at Rosas, *senora*."

"Ah!" and the Marquesa rang a bell. "I shall give orders for it to be sent for at once, *senor*. Mean-

while all at Las Rosas is yours. You must learn to know and love it here almost as we do."

"I am so glad you will tell me something about that song, senorita; it seemed so strange as I came up the mountain to hear an English song being sung by three different voices, and then to find you all spoke English as easily and fluently as Spanish, though the Marquesa tells me she has never been in England, and you, you say, have never been fifty miles beyond Las Rosas."

"Yes, it is strange," answered Dulce, stooping to pick a superb red rose as she spoke, and adding it to the large cluster of roses of many colors that she already carried in one hand. "It is strange about the song; but about our speaking English, it is easier to understand. We had an English governess, as well as a Spanish tutor. Let us go to the arbor, senor. The sun here is getting hot, and I want to tell you about that song which interests you."

They passed down one of the long paths through the rose garden, and presently entered a rustic arbor, high up on a plateau some distance from the castle. Far off the blue expanse of the Mediterranean was outlined against the eastern horizon. Dulce put down her roses and turned to the young man with a smile.

"If you will run down that path, senor, you will find a little stream of water. Bring me some of the wet moss that grows on the banks to wrap around the stems of my roses. It will keep them fresh till we return to the house."

He was gone to do her bidding in an instant, and a few seconds saw him back again, pieces of soft damp moss, dripping with water, in one hand. He helped her wrap them around the roses.

"Las Rosas is teaching me many new things, senorita," he said. "This is one of them."

"It may seem foolish of me," she answered, "but I can't bear to see anything die. It grieves me to pick the flowers and have them fade and droop. There are so many, I might gather dozens every day and let them fade as I carried them around; but once picked, I want to keep them fresh and alive as long as I can."

"Is that why you never wear them?" he asked.

"Yes," she said. "I love to see them all blooming in the garden, or in great bowls of water in the house; but I can't wear them on my dress or in my hair, as most women do."

He thought to himself that she had no need of such adornment; but some instinct told him that this beautiful girl, not yet seventeen, would not care for such a compliment, so he was silent.

The flowers disposed of, Dulce folded her slender hands.

"I promised to tell you about that song, *senor*," she said. "To begin with, you know that my father was an Englishman. I think the *madre* told you that much?"

"Yes," he answered.

"My father was the Honorable Bertram Howard," went on the young girl. "He was poor, but of good birth, and a Catholic. Eighteen years ago he came up this mountain on foot, just as you did a week ago. He had letters of introduction to my grandfather from friends in Madrid. The end of it was that he and my mother fell in love with each other and became engaged.

"My mother learned to read and speak English, and she and my father read the English classics together. Tennyson's poems were one of their favorite readings, and the 'Bugle Song' from the 'Princess,' they were particularly fond of. It was arranged," continued the young girl, "that my father on his marriage should take my mother's name, and become Marques de las Rosas on my grandfather's death. Such is our Spanish custom when there is no male heir in the line of descent. They were married amid much feasting and rejoicing. My grandfather was very fond of his son-in-law, and all went

happily. One afternoon my father and mother were sitting out under the trees where you first saw us, near the edge of the cliff, when my father commenced singing the 'Bugle Song.' In the midst of it a horseman rode up, Don Luis Carducho, a friend of our house, and begged my father to come out and have a ride over the country with him.

"He seemed loath to go, but my mother urged it. She herself was not able to accompany him. His horse was led up and he sprang into the saddle, after bidding my mother good-bye. The two friends rode off gaily; and far down the road my mother heard the refrain of the 'Bugle Song,' that my father was still singing:

'Oh, hark, O hear, how thin and clear,  
And thinner, clearer, farther going!  
O sweet and far, from cliff and scar,  
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!"

At last the sound died away in the distance.

"My mother sat under the trees and watched the two horsemen until they disappeared southward; then she returned to the house to wait my father's return."

The young girl paused a moment and glanced at Heathcote, with a shadow in her soft brown eyes.

"But he never returned, senor. The two friends rode that afternoon for nearly fifteen miles, and

toward dusk they started for home. Don Luis turned in at his own *casa* five miles from here, leaving my father to make the rest of the way alone."

"And has no trace, no word, or explanation of his disappearance ever come to you?" asked Heathcote.

"Not the very slightest, *senor*. The country was searched for miles. It was feared bandits might have carried him off, and my grandfather offered immense rewards for his return; rewards that would certainly have tempted the most exacting bandit; but nothing ever came of it. Two weeks after the disappearance my twin brother and I were born. My mother departed from family traditions in the matter of names, and called us Dulce and Claro, which in our Spanish tongue means sweet and clear, in remembrance of the 'Bugle Song' that my father loved so well; and ever since then, on the anniversary of his disappearance, she has sung that song on the very spot where they parted. As soon as we were old enough she made us join with her in the song. She believes that some day my father will come back, and will be cheered if he hears the familiar words and music."

"Ah, *senorita*," said Heathcote, "how strange and romantic, and yet how sad. Has no one formulated any theory about your father's disappearance?"

"All sorts of theories were advanced," answered



the young girl. "Some said one thing, some another. There were those who thought he had been carried off, either to the mountains between here and France, or to a fishing boat in the Mediterranean; but that theory in time was dropped. The object of such a capture could only have been a ransom, and no one ever tried to claim the reward, though free pardon with the money was promised if my father was returned safe and well."

"And your mother," said Heathcote; "what does she think?"

"My mother has only one fixed idea, senor; she is sure my father did not leave her voluntarily. He loved her devotedly, and he had everything to make him happy. All who knew him well agreed he was one of the noblest men that ever lived."

"It is strange," said the young Englishman. "How I wish I could help unravel this mystery, and bring your father back to you, senorita."

The young girl arose.

"Thank you, senor," she said. "I too, believe he is still living, and that some day this mystery will be cleared. The deepest enigmas sometimes have the simplest explanation, if we only knew where to put our finger on the right key."

"Your mother has asked me to stay a month," said the young man. "I mean to try heart and soul,

senorita, to find the missing link in this mystery."

The young girl gave him a singularly sweet and brilliant smile.

"Ah, senor," she said, "if only that happiness could come to my poor mother. Whatever you do I am sure will be wisely and discreetly done. Not like my poor old *Ninera*," she added, with a little laugh. "Every year about this time she goes out to look for the elves. She is sure that the 'horns of Elfland' had something to do with spiriting my father away."

## CHAPTER II.

"We are going to have company to dinner to night," said the Marquesa. "Among them Don Alvador, Baron Hernz, an old friend of our house. I hope you will like our guests, senor."

"I shall be delighted to meet any friends of yours, Marquesa," said Heathcote. "Does Don Alvador live near here?"

"About ten miles westward," answered the Marquesa. "Indeed, his estate begins where ours ends. The families have been friends for over a hundred years."

Coming home that afternoon from a walk across the country, a pastime of which the young English-

man was very fond, and finding it still wanted about an hour of the time when he would have to dress for dinner, he paused in some woods just outside the arbor where he and the young daughter of the house had held their memorable conversation. The trees on this side of the arbor grew thick and close, and as the day was warm and the woody retreat delightfully cool and shady, Heathcote involuntarily threw himself down on the soft turf, and with hands clasped under his head, gave himself up to a few moments of delicious indolence.

He had been there only five minutes when there was a rustle of skirts, the sound of voices, and two people entered the arbor on the other side of the thicket and sat down.

"Twenty years is a long time for a man to wait, Margarita," said a strange voice, "but I have waited, as I shall wait another twenty, if need be."

"I wish you would drop that subject, once and forever, Alvador," was the answer, in a voice that the young Englishman recognized as the Marquesa's. "If I was unwilling twenty years ago, do you think I will marry you now when I have never had any proof of my husband's death?"

"That fact, at this late day, seems quite certain," was the reply.

Heathcote's first impulse was to arise and walk away; his next to keep still. They would certainly

hear him if he moved, and the Marquesa would be so embarrassed that more harm than good would ensue. Besides, he reflected that if Don Alvador had been waiting twenty years for the Marquesa, that fact must be known, so he would not be listening to secrets.

"It is such a long time since you have touched on this subject," said Dona Margarita, "that I thought you had forgotten it. I beg you will not refer to it again, Alvador. If you do, I shall have to refuse to receive your visits."

"I shall never forget," was the answer, "though if you insist, I shall keep silence. I suppose chivalry demands that much of me."

"Listen, Alvador," said the Marquesa. "You are still young—what men call in your prime. For seventeen years you have shut yourself up in your castle, and have never been away, you tell me, for more than twenty-four hours at a time. You have grown morbid brooding on this one subject. Go away somewhere and travel. See the world, and meet other women. You owe it to your ancient name to marry, especially as you have not even a remote heir."

"All that advice, Margarita, is contrary to my taste, my inclination and my ability. There are reasons why I cannot at present leave my castle, if I would."

There was a rustle of Dona Margarita's skirts as she arose.

"I am sorry for you, Alvador," she said. "You have been the friend and companion of my childhood and girlhood. You deserve something better than the course you have mapped out for yourself for the past seventeen years. If you must persist in it, there is a boundary I cannot let you overstep. Have some respect for my sorrow—a grief that is as fresh now as it was seventeen years ago."

"Oh, my God!" said the man passionately. "Do you realize, Margarita, that you are only thirty-seven, and in the prime of your own beauty, and you condemn yourself to endless mourning."

"I have my children," was the answer; and there was a tone in her proud, cold voice that made the young Englishman marvel at the Spaniard's persistence.

He heard the two leave the arbor, and as soon as they were well out of earshot he arose and hurried by a more circuitous route toward the house, realizing he had only half an hour in which to dress for dinner.

"This Spanish Don will prove interesting," he thought, as he hurried through his dressing. "I am glad there are to be two or three other guests. I will have a better chance to study him."

. . . . .  
"Where shall we go for our ride?" said Dulce.

She, her brother and Heathcote were mounted on handsome horses, preparatory to a long ride across the country. It was a week after the dinner party. Dona Margarita stood in the hall door, waiting to wave them farewell, as Dulce asked her question.

"Would it be too far for you, *senorita*, to ride to Don Alvador's castle? Since you have told me so much about it, I am quite curious to see it."

"I have ridden much further than that," she answered, "and it is a beautiful ride, over a good road. Yes, we will go that way, *senor*."

Waving farewell to the Marquesa, the three cantered off, and soon were making their way carefully down the steep mountain road, which they had to traverse before reaching the more level road below.

It was a glorious September day, and the young people thoroughly enjoyed the ride which, in an incredibly short time, brought them in sight of Don Alvador's castle.

"What a magnificent place," said Heathcote; "and yet," he added, "it is gloomy. It looks like a mediaeval fortress in spite of its beautiful site and surroundings."

"Don Alvador himself looks like a robber baron," said the young Marques. "When he comes to Las

Rosas with that long face of his, and his melancholy eyes, I feel like asking him how many prisoners, and how much treasure, he is holding in his dungeon."

"I wouldn't let the thought have expression, Claro," said his sister. "The Don can't take teasing, and his temper is not mild."

"I am glad he is not my father," said the boy, and Heathcote found himself wondering how much the young people knew.

"Don Alvador must lead a lonely life," he said, "with his family dead, or scattered. Does not he ever go to Madrid and take part in its gaities?"

"He lives the life of a recluse," answered the young Marques. "As to the gaities at the Capital, he despises them. I have heard him say that a grandee of Spain should have no use for the present gay monde. He thinks Spain is being ruined by the passing away of the old order of things."

"In some ways he is right," said the young Englishman. "I doubt if the world is being materially benefitted by this modern spirit of democracy."

Dulce threw him a grateful look out of her dark eyes. The old order of things was evidently more dear to her than to her brother.

"You must come here some day with my brother, senor," she said, "and see the inside of the castle; it is well worth a visit. As children we often went

there when Don Alvarador's mother was living."

"He has curiosities and heirlooms hundreds of years old," she continued. "Armor of the twelfth century, old fire-arms and old furniture, besides superb tapestries. His private chapel has a collection of church vestments, and silver and gold vessels, illuminated missals and hour books, and two or three fine paintings, which I think cannot be equalled in Europe."

As she talked on, an idea, born of Claro's remark about prisoners and underground dungeons, had flashed into the young Englishman's mind. At first the thought seemed improbable; but as they cantered rapidly homeward, it gained strength. Why had no one thought of it, he wondered.

Since, apparently, no one had, it would remain for him to try and solve the riddle.

For the first time since his arrival at the castle, a month ago, he was impatient for the evening in the *sala* to come to an end so he might be alone in his own room, free to give his mind wholly to the new idea that had taken possession of him.



## CHAPTER III.

Heathcote was alone in his own apartments, and having lighted a pipe, he sat down to smoke and think. Gifted with a lively imagination and logical mind, he was not long in going over, with lawyer-like precision, such facts as were known to him regarding the disappearance of the Marques de las Rosas.

"There seem to be three or four things," he thought "which could cause his disappearance. Let me consider each in turn: Firstly, to go away of his own volition. This seems to be out of the question; he was manifestly young, happy and contented; acceptable alike to the Marquesa and her family. From his antecedents there was apparently nothing in his past of a nature to make him anxious to disappear and hide from the world. Then, secondly, he evidently was not abducted for gold, since no notice was taken of the immense rewards offered for his return, or for information about him. And thirdly, it was not the result of any accident, as every foot of ground for miles around was searched in the vain effort to find him. There remains therefore only one logical reason left: someone abducted him for revenge, and either made way with him, or has been holding him in hiding all these years. If this is so, and revenge is the solution, there was some motive behind the desire for revenge, and if I am not mis-

taken, the *prima facie* cause was unrequited love. Ergo!" said the young man, clapping his hands softly, like a boy. "It is that robber baron, Don Alvarador. He loved Dona Margarita before her husband appeared on the scene; the latter stole her from him, as it were. I believe he can tell where the Marques is. Perhaps he is in his castle, and that is why the Don will not go away for more than one day at a time. I remember he told the Marquesa that there were reasons why he could not at present leave his castle if he would."

Heathcote lay back in his easy chair puffing out clouds of smoke.

"Yes," he continued, "the more I think of it, the more probable it seems. Love and revenge, and the desire in some way to win Dona Margarita for himself. Now the next question is how to sift the matter to the bottom. I must get Don Claro to take me to that feudal fortress for a visit, and then my future course can better be determined upon."

He smoked on for half an hour; then, with a final puff, knocked the ashes from his pipe.

"For inspiring ideas, and a soothing effect on one's nerves," he thought, "the pipe is a man's best friend. It is to us what knitting seems to be to a woman. I will rely on my trusty pipe for more light on this subject."

## CHAPTER IV.

"I am charmed to see you, Senor Heathcote," said Don Alvarador, "and you, too, Marques. You both do me honor to pay me a visit in my lonely castle."

"Senor Heathcote leaves us next week, Don Alvarador," said Claro. "My mother said she could not let him cross the Pyrenes into France, and then go back to England, without seeing a real Spanish castle and its treasures. "Ours," said the boy, "does not compare with yours in age or interest."

"Las Rosas is better in keeping with the beauty and youth of its occupants," replied the Don, with a gallant bow.

Heathcote looked at his host with a feeling such as he had on first seeing the Baron, a feeling of instinctive distrust. Don Alvarador was tall, and thin almost to leanness. He wore a short, dark beard which, when he talked or laughed, did not hide large, strong white teeth; his olive skin and black hair were joined to eyes which, instead of being brown, were blue, a peculiar characteristic of some Spaniards. The eyes, rather too close together, were divided by a thin aquiline nose.

"He must have been a handsome man in his youth," thought Heathcote, "and I suppose he is still; but those teeth look cruel. I don't wonder Dona Margarita preferred my countryman."

So thinking, he and the young Marques followed the Baron, who preceded his guests across the wide hall of the Castle to the grand *Sala*.

"What a magnificent room!" said Heathcote, in genuine admiration, and the Baron looked pleased, proceeding to point out first one object of interest and then another. Some rare old tapestries that hung on the wall had been presented to one of his ancestors by Louis XIV of France. A cabinet full of pottery had been brought home from Egypt by some roving Baron Hernz, and there were strange curios from India and China that had been picked up by a Hernz who sailed the seas, and so on—one thing after another was admired and commented upon.

"I have often heard my mother talk," said Heathcote, "of a 'castle in Spain.' This, surely, Baron, is the realization."

"You have only been in the Sala," said the young Marques. "Wait until you have seen the rest."

A majordomo here entered with a tray containing refreshments, of which the guests readily partook, their long ride having given them an appetite. An hour later the Baron commenced showing his English guest the rest of the castle. From one room to another they wandered until at last, at the very top of the castle, they stopped in a hall near a long lancet

window set deep in the wall. "This is where there is a secret door, Baron," said the boy eagerly. "Is it not so?"

The Baron laughed, showing all his strong white teeth.

"Can a wolf laugh?" thought the young Englishman. "If so, this is an exact reproduction of it."

"Yes, the wonderful secret door is here, Marques," was the answer to the boy's question. The Baron pressed a panel in the wall as he spoke. It slowly rolled back, revealing on the other side a heavy iron door, thickly studded with nails.

"You have seen all the castle," said Don Alvdor, "except a few rooms opening out of this door, which are not now used. This wing of the castle has been closed, and the door locked for many years. It is so choked up with dirt and cobwebs that I never show it to my guests."

"In ancient times this part was used as a prison, was it not, Baron?" asked the Marques.

Heathcote was looking straight at Don Alvdor as the boy spoke; for one second, so it seemed, he saw an ugly gleam in the man's eye. It was gone in an instant, and the Baron was his polite suave self again.

I believe," he answered, "that in the early days of our house prisoners of war, and later political spies

have been confined here. The rooms, however, are comfortable, not like the dungeons of romance."

"All this side of the house," said the boy, who seemed unconsciously bent on aiding Heathcote by asking questions of his host, "has a very large wing, joined to the main part, but on this floor, Baron, you say there are only a few rooms. It seems strange."

"Nature evidently meant you for an architect, Claro, mio," said Don Alvarador, with a slight shrug. "You observe a great deal my friend, but since you have noticed this little peculiarity of the castle, let me explain. First, however, we will descend to the ground, where I can better point out to you all you do not understand."

A few minutes later they had crossed the courtyard west of the castle, and were soon out in the park on the south side of the house and away from the road.

"Look," said the Baron, "you see this wing of the castle built with an apse. The ground floor is the chapel, the floor above comprises my private rooms; above that are some guest chambers. On what would be the fourth floor you see a high stone wall encircling the three sides of the room. The wall is solid, twelve feet in height, and with no windows, or opening of any kind in it. Inside of this wall is a

gallery ten feet wide, and open to the sky above. In the center of this gallery, which surrounds them on three sides, are some rooms that end in a long narrow passage leading to the iron door behind the secret panel."

"Now I understand, Baron," said Heathcote.

"In olden times, when prisoners were confined here, any one from outside would think they were to be found in subterranean dungeons, and would never imagine that that high wall was anything more than stones enclosing empty space."

"I have heard my mother say, Senor, that the wall and prison on the roof—for such it really is—as well as the concealed door, was built by an ancestor in the thirteenth century, who went by the name of Juan the Humane. Prisoners of war in those days, as now, had to be taken; but he insisted that they should be confined where they had air, sun and light. The gallery furnishes a place for exercise, while yet both it and the rooms are hid from the view of the outer world by the high stone wall."

"Some day, Baron," said the Marques, "you must show us this enchanted land."

"You would soon wish yourself out again, my friend," was the answer.

As Heathcote and his young companion cantered briskly homeward, the boy turned half way in his

saddle and looked at the Englishman with a droll smile.

"I don't think, Senor," he said, "that Juan the Humane is reproduced in our friend, Don Alvador. I am always telling the madre that he looks as if he could be cruel, and, cobwebs and dirt notwithstanding, I think he might have shown us his roof prison. I shall not rest until I see what the other side of that high wall is like."

"I feel the same way," said Heathcote, with a smile. "The Baron certainly kept us from seeing the most interesting part of the Castle; but I don't think he will ever show it to us voluntarily."

To himself the young Englishman was saying over and over: "There is a secret behind that iron door, and if I am not mistaken it concerns the house of Las Rosas. A little more patience and I shall find out, meanwhile I must think of the best plan to pursue."

Then aloud, to Don Claro, he said:

"I wonder what led Don Alvador to tell us so much when he would not show us beyond that door. Did you know all about it before to-day, Marques?"

"Only vaguely," answered the boy. "Here we are at home, Senor, and there is the *Madre*. Perhaps she can shed more light on the Baron's mysterious prison."



Jumping off their horses, they joined Dona Margarita and Dulce, and were soon giving an animated account of their visit.

## CHAPTER V.

A clear moonlight night was shining over the country. It covered with a silver sheen the grim Castle of the Baron Hernz, and sharply defined the shadows cast by a spreading tree that grew on the south side of the Castle, close to the wing; the long branches of the tree were swept by the wind across the stained glass windows of the chapel.

There was a rustle in the tree tops over head, and a pair of blue eyes gazed out from between the leaves noting with keen and eager gaze every detail in the construction of the wing, in which all interest of the owner of the blue eyes was evidently centered.

"I think I have it now," said Heathcote; for he it was. "By careful climbing I can scale the castle as far as the high wall. Once up there, if any human being is on the other side of that wall, he must hear me."

It was a week since the young Englishman had said good-bye to his friends at Las Rosas, and had departed by train, as they thought, for Pau, to join his mother, who, as he had surmised, had been un-

able to accept the Marquesa's invitation to visit her.

Instead of proceeding to France, Heathcote had stopped at the first town on his route, had bought a camping outfit and had followed this up by disguising himself.

This done, he had returned to Rosas, and, unrecognized by anyone, had pitched his camp in the mountains, as near the Baron's castle as possible.

For three nights he had come where he now was, to study every detail of the mysterious wing.

The tall tree, which he had climbed, almost to the top, had shown him that the wing of the castle was so built that he could, with care, climb from one pinnacle or block, to another till he reached the high wall. It would require daring and skill; for in his ascent, he must avoid the windows of the Baron's own private rooms above the chapel, and there was also the risk of his hearing the adventurous climber; but Heathcote had laid his plans carefully and was confident of success. Some details he left to circumstances as they arose; but his main intention was to wait patiently for a stormy night. This night soon came, as the autumnal equinoctial was now due. Once near the prison wall he intended to try and attract the supposed prisoner's attention by singing the bugle song. In this lay the greatest element of danger; if the prisoner could hear, so might the

Baron; but he had selected a point for his ascent away from Don Alvarador's sleeping room, which he knew was on the north side of the wing.

He scanned the heavens, and, noting some heavy clouds moving westward toward the moon, hastily began to descend the tree; and as soon as the moonlight was obscured, he darted out across the park, and in a few minutes was ascending the mountain in the direction of his tent, which he had pitched on a slope of the hills where the trees completely hid it from view.

Mingled with his dreams of the lost Marques and Don Alvarador was the knowledge that his intense interest in the search he had undertaken was due to a growing interest in Donna Dulce. The Marquesa had seen and understood, and had divined that her young daughter was not indifferent to the handsome and manly Englishman.

"History repeats itself," she thought. "'Twas from England that the glory of my life came to me. If it is so with my Dulce may God and the blessed saints grant her a happier ending to her romance than her mother had."

Dona Margarita knew by intuition that Heathcote would return. She little dreamed how near he was, nor of the work he had undertaken to carry through for Dulce's sake.

. . . . .  
Two days later the expected storm had broken over Rosas. The thunder rolled and reverberated across the mountains, the lighting flashed over the valley, and rain fell in torrents. It was the beginning of the equinoctial.

In the face of wind and rain, protected as far as possible by a rubber cap and suit, with every sense alert, Heathcote about twelve o'clock that night commenced his ascent of the castle wing. The darkness was so great that, guided, only by the sense of feeling and aided by occasional flashes of lightning, he had to make his way slowly over the wet slippery stone. One slip, one false step, and he would have been dashed to the ground below and probably killed in the descent. Occasionally, when he reached a particularly advantageous point, he would stop to rest and take breath. So slow was his progress that it was one o'clock when he finally reached a square block of stone, buttressed by a high pinnacle, and close to the wall that encircled the prison, which, now that he was so near, looked twice as high and ten times more formidable than it had done from the park below.

One great difficulty the young Englishman had seen from the first, that he could not scale a smooth wall, twelve feet high, unaided, and he had therefore

brought a stout rope with him. Before commencing his ascent he had tied one end around his waist and had allowed the other end to dangle free. This had increased the difficulty and slowness of his climb, as at every step he had to shake the rope so as to be sure it had not caught on any stone or pinnacle. Once or twice in his ascent he gave a grim smile at the thought of the Baron possibly discovering and following him.

"A good pull at the rope," he thought, "and it would be all over with me!"

Now, however, he had, so far, triumphed over all difficulties, and once on the broad stone, and with his back resting against the stout buttress, he drew up the rope, unfastened it from his waist, and winding it around a stone pinnacle in front of him, prepared to begin his song.

He possessed a clear, sweet tenor voice of unusual power and penetration, and during his evenings at Las Rosas both he and Dulce had sung and played together, so he felt in good training. Hope beat high in his heart as he commenced the opening bars of the song. Were Dona Margarita's long years of waiting to be soon ended?

"O hark, O hear, how thin and clear,  
And thinner, clearer, farther going!  
O sweet and far, from cliff and scar,  
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing.  
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying;  
Blow, bugle, answer echoes,  
Dying, dying, dying."

Far over the mountains, but rolling nearer and nearer, came the booming of the thunder. Crash succeeded crash, then died away over the valley, and high above the sough of the wind and swirl of the rain the clear young voice, instinct with hope, sang on:

"Our echoes roll from soul to soul,  
And grow forever and forever."  
*'Our echoes roll from soul to soul,  
And grow forever and forever.'*

Was it the echoes of the valley that seemed to take up and repeat the verse over and over?

"Forever, forever," it said; but not forever could sin and evil remain triumphant!

The man on the other side of the wall was out on the gallery in the storm. The rain beat down on his bare head—his scanty clothing was drenched; but what cared he? Was he facing the hallucination that sometimes precedes the lonely death of a recluse; or, was it life that he heard, glorious pulsating life?

With ear pressed close to the wall, he listened. The song was beginning again.

"The long light shakes across the lakes," sang the voice; and simultaneously the lightning darted across the sky, one flash succeeded another, now here, now there, till it seemed almost like the fantastic play of the Aurora Borealis. The man behind the wall turned his face heavenward toward the light, and the healing rain dispelled from his brain the hopelessness and long agony of seventeen years. When the next peal of thunder had rolled off over the valley two voices were singing the rest of the song—the voice behind the wall gained in power and volume, as the other became more joyously full of triumph. Hope and charity, impelled by faith, had won.

As the last note of the magnificent song died on the wild night wind, the young Englishman spoke:

"Bertram, Marques de las Rosas," he said, "is it your voice I hear?"

"Yes," came the answer.

"My song has told you," said the other, "that it is you I have come here to seek. Have courage, Marques, and listen to what I say, for every moment is precious. I am here to deliver you from your seventeen years of bondage; but we have a powerful foe only two floors below us. If he awakes and finds us out he will not stop at killing us both."

"I know not who you are, senor," said the Marques "except that you are here as my deliverer, for which may heaven bless you. I am ready to do whatever you command, only tell me, senor, of my wife; for I have waited seventeen years to know."

"She is alive and well," was the answer, "and has been faithful to you, Marques, all these years. She has never believed you dead, and watches and waits for your coming."

"Now, Marques," he continued, "listen. I have a rope here that I shall throw over the wall; is there any place where you can fasten it securely?"

"Right at my feet," was the answer, "there is a heavy iron ring in the stone, strong enough to hold a dozen men."

Two or three times Heathcote swung the rope in the air before it flew over the wall. His position on the ledge of stone was so precarious that he could not swing his arm as freely as he would on terra firma, or on horseback.

But now the Marques had hold of it, and in a few seconds called out that he had fastened it securely to the iron ring and was ready.

Bracing himself against the buttress and planting one foot firmly against the opposite wall, Heathcote wound the rope around a pillar and drew it taut; pressing one foot on it, and holding the ends tight in both hands, he called out:



"Now, Marques, can you climb this rope, hand over hand, sailor fashion? If you once reach the top of the wall you can easily let yourself down to where I am."

"One second, my friend," was the answer. Softly the Marques crept across the gallery to his sleeping room and donned his clothes. In a few moments he was back.

"Ready," he said.

"Ready," was the answer.

Every muscle in the young Englishman's body was strained to the utmost as he kept tight hold of the rope. Judging from the weight, he concluded the Marques must be a large man. There was no sliding back during his climbing, a fact that filled Heathcote with thankfulness. His fear had been that the man might have been weakened by confinement or disease, and unable to climb.

One other tense anxiety remained; the rope was stretched taut over the top of the wall, and was thence drawn tight against the wall's sharp edges. As the Marques strained and pulled on the rope, Heathcote breathed a prayer that it would not be cut by his weight.

The thunder had died down, but the rain still fell, when at last Heathcote made out first the head and then the whole figure of the Marques on top of the wall.

For a second the man sat there. Was it not as well that darkness shrouded the world which he had not looked on for seventeen years?

Then quickly and carefully he slid down the rope till his feet touched the stone ledge where his young countryman was waiting to steady him with one hand, while with his voice he gave him a cordial welcome.

"Victory is almost ours, Marques," he said, "but until we are out of this we are not really safe." And then in as few and rapid words as possible he explained to the Marques how they must make their descent to the park below.

"I will go first," he said. "And remember, Marques, one step at a time—hold on to each stone and pinnacle and try, as far as you can, to follow me. The stones are wet and slippery; but there is a place for hand and foot all the way down if you are careful."

"The mercy of God has brought us thus far," was the answer, in a voice singularly resonant and mellow. "It will not fail us now, my friend."

One second the men paused to clasp hands, in a strong close grip that spoke volumes, then they began their descent.

The wind blew, and the rain fell, and the storm seemed to be lashing itself into renewed fury; but

they heeded it not. The sense of feeling alone was necessary in their perilous descent, and that neither darkness, wind or rain could affect. In half an hour they were in the park, and just as the faint gray dawn broke in the East, the two men, tired, wet through, but happy, reached the little camp on the mountain side.

## CHAPTER VI.

The dim daylight had just appeared in the East when Don Alvarador woke up and turned uneasily on his bed.

*"Madre sanctisima,"* he said. "What a night! All the furies of hell seemed let loose. I have not known such a storm for years."

Thoughts came crowding swiftly on the Baron.

Once awake, he was wide awake, and there were those who said he despised anyone who woke up drowsy and with scattered wits. With keen mind and ready invention he lay still and considered a plan that he had been evolving in his brain for a month past, ever since the conversation with Dona Margarita, which Heathcote had overheard.

"Seventeen years I have waited," thought Don Alvarador. "Seventeen miserable and torturing years, with that man overhead, who will not die a natural

death, and who I dare not, on my soul, make way with."

He paused for a moment to watch a spider spinning its web in a distant corner, then resumed his train of thought.

"I have waited too long, and now the time has come to act. If I can kidnap Margarita and carry her off I think I can win her consent to marry me, and then she will be mine—mine at last." The man's eyes gleamed, and his large, white teeth came together with a snap.

Yes, he would do it. Away with any more of these womanish fears about that ancestor, Juan the Humane, who had laid a command on his descendants that no prisoner in Castle Hernz was ever, for any cause, to be put to death. Any son of the house who dared disobey this mandate, so old Juan had said, would meet with untold calamities, including the loss of his money, castle and estate. It was this fear which had kept the Baron from long ago killing the Marques.

Presently he arose and, passing into his dressing room, which, like the bedroom, was on the north side of the wing, began dressing. He soon finished his toilet and, opening a door, crossed to his study on the opposite side of the hall from his sleeping room.

What was it that suddenly arrested his steps and

made him utter a quick, sharp exclamation? The rain had held up, though it was still cloudy and threatening, but the wind was still blowing hard, and there, swinging back and forth in front of his study window, was a long, thick rope.

In a second the Baron's head was out of the window, and he was looking first up and then down. Yes, unmistakably the rope, which hung only a little below his study window, was fastened to the inside of the Marques' prison.

Don Alvarador uttered not a word as he hastened down the narrow corridor, between his suite of rooms, and quickly ascended a spiral iron staircase which brought him out on the floor above, near the secret door.

It was the work of an instant to press the panel, unlock the inner door, and with hurried tread cross the passage that led to the gallery surrounding the prison rooms. This gallery, open to the sky, enclosed by the stone wall, and with the rooms in the middle, gave the place something of the appearance of the deck of a ship.

Little of this thought Don Alvarador, as, with a hasty glance, at the rope fastened so securely to the iron ring in the stone floor, he entered the open door leading into the outer room of the suite; this had been the Marques' sitting room; but there was no

sign of him here. None in the bedroom, where the Baron saw the wet night clothes on the floor, evidence of the missing man's hasty toilet. Nor was he to be found in the other two chambers which comprised the four rooms of the prison.

The man's brain reeled as he came out again on the gallery and stared at the rope thrown over the castle wall. So his prisoner had escaped, and after seventeen years!

That he had been aided from outside was plain, but who could it have been, who had betrayed his secret?

Not old Marta, his foster-mother, the only sharer of his crime, who for seventeen years had cooked the Marques' meals and carried them to him; she was absolutely devoted to him and his house, and the Baron knew would have died sooner than tell what she knew. Could it have been Don Claro, who had evinced such curiosity about the mystery of the roof on his last visit?

No, he was too young to display such ingenuity. But stay! he did not come alone. Yes, by heaven, it must have been that young Englishman. He remembered how carefully he had scanned the tower, its buttresses and pinnacles. How keenly his blue eyes had seemed to note every detail. He had thought then it was a cultivated man's love for the

beauties of a fine old building, but now, alas! he knew better. And then came an overwhelming knowledge that his future in his own country was as irrevocably ruined as his past was full of wickedness.

Even now the Marques was probably reunited to his wife. The pure, proud Dona Margarita knew his sin, and how much more deeply he would have been sinning against her if she had consented to marry him.

The Marques was rich and powerful, and in a few days, a week at the latest, all Spain would know the story of those seventeen years.

Like a man drunk with wine, the Baron staggered back to the Marques' living room and sank into a chair. It had pleased him, in his fantastic adherence to the creed of his ancestor, Juan, to surround his prisoner with every comfort. The rooms were luxuriously furnished, the Marques had been regularly supplied with books and newspapers, fresh air, and exercise on the gallery had been his. Everything except liberty had been given to him, and to this he, no doubt, owed the preservation of his reason and his life.

Don Alvarador glanced around the handsome room, bereft forever of the long familiar figure.

The silence seemed suddenly to appal him, the weight of his sin haunted him, and sudden and overwhelming shame tortured him.

Was not the thought of Dona Margarita's scorn his Nemesis?

A fit of shuddering seized him—with broken, incoherent words the unhappy man started to his feet. Old Marta coming up the stairs from his room, bearing the Marques' breakfast, dropped her tray and uttered a shrill scream as she sprang forward to save him; but she was too late. Opening a window on the corridor between the gallery and the secret door, the Baron leaped over the sill, and striking against buttress, roof and pinnacles in his fall, was lying a few seconds later, a lifeless heap in the courtyard below.

“I could not sleep, *Madre mia*,” said Dulce. Could you?”

The Marquesa smiled on her young daughter, whose bloom was not diminished by her alleged sleepless night.

“It was a dreadful storm,” she answered, “and it is not over yet; those dark clouds in the West presage more rain. I am glad you and Claro have no especial engagement to-day.”

“Ah!” said Dulce, “Claro wanted to try that new Arabian horse of his, but I will get him to try some new music with me instead.”

The Marquesa's pale face lit up. The twins love for music was one of her greatest pleasures.



The door opened and the major-domo entered, bearing a silver tray, going up to the Marquesa, who was presiding at a late breakfast, he presented her with a card on a salver.

"A visiter, and so early," said the Marquesa; and then she uttered an exclamation.

"Our friend, Senor Heathcote," she said.

Dulce's blooming face became a vivid carnation, and her brother, who was looking at her, smiled mischievously.

"He is not alone, Senora la Marquesa," said the major-doma. "A friend is with him. I showed them in the sala."

The Marquesa arose, her soft white silk morning gown, with its delicate lace, making a charming setting for her dark hair and pure pale face. In spite of her years of sorrow, Dona Magarita at thirty-seven looked several years younger. Crossing the grand hall of the castle she entered the sala. For a moment she paused after lifting the heavy gold brocade portiere over the door. The rich color of the curtain set off her shimmering white dress and dusky hair—in her corsage was a bunch of the fragrant red roses that in bowls and vases were scattered over the room. The young Englishman, who stood almost in the center of the white and gold *sala*, partly concealing his companion from view,

never seen Dona Margarita look more beautiful. He advanced, and so did she.

"You are welcome," she said in her sweet low voice.

"Marquesa," said the young man, standing now so close to her that his tall stalwart figure completely shielded from view the friend who had been bending over to look at a book that lay open on a table at the other end of the room. "Marquesa, you are surprised to see me here, and so early; but I come as the bearer of important news to you and your house."

The curtain lifted again to give entrance to the twins. At the words just uttered they paused. Claro with a bewildered gaze, Dulce with a sudden look of intelligence. Involuntarily the young girl clasped her hands and fixed her earnest, searching gaze first on the handsome young Englishman, then on that immovable figure at the other end of the sala. She took a step forward, then paused.

The Marquesa raised her beautiful dark eyes to Heathcote's face.

"Our life is so uneventful," she said, "so quiet; what great news have you heard in the great world that concerns us, senor?"

"Ah! Marquesa," said the young man, and he could no longer control his agitation, "it is strange and wonderful tidings for which you must prepare. I dare think it may not be too great a shock for you,

knowing as I do that you have never believed the lost one to be dead."

He stepped to one side as he spoke, and the figure at the table turned around. A man whose patrician head was gray, but whose eyes were alight with the love that is ever young and immortal.

"Margarita!" he said.

The young girl by the door saw it all through a mist of tears.

With a little cry of wonderful new-born joy—a joy that now at last threw off the patient sorrow of so many years—the Marquesa sprang forward, and she and her husband met.

"Bertram, *mio*," she said, and then——

"Oh, *Madre, Sanctisima*, we thank thee."

"And so"—as the old chronicle of the house of las Rosas says—"Were they happy forever after."

## A ROMANCE OF THE GUADALUPE.

"AND that is the way it was," wound up old Santos.

Little Pedro nodded, words seemed unnecessary; but his bare brown toes kicked up the earth underfoot in a manner suggestive of thorough contentment and appreciation.

"It was a long time ago," pursued the old Mexican, as if loath to leave off his story; "but they do say that since then the Madre Santisima never fails to touch the heart of whoever prays at her mountain shrine."

He arose as he spoke, and knocking the ashes from his pipe walked into the low-roofed adobe hut where his wife was preparing the midday meal.

"A long time ago," thought little Pedro, "and the Madre Santisima did it—the good Madre!"

He lay on his back gazing up at the sky; but presently his thoughts became far off and hazy, and gradually the black lashes closed over the brown eyes, and he was asleep. Overhead the hot Texas sun beat down on the bare brown earth, lighting up the gilt cross on the village church, and lending a soft sheen to the delicate haze that hung over the distant hills. Range on range these mountains extended, as far as the eye could reach, while be-

tween them lay rich fertile valleys through which ran the romantic Guadalupe, its clear waters winding in and out of the trees until it was lost to view in the distant range of hills.

Hotter and hotter grew the sun, but little Pedro slept on; what would indeed have been intolerable heat in the North was here tempered by a strong breeze from the South, and the freedom of the atmosphere from dampness or humidity made the mounting thermometer endurable.

Down at the railroad station two canvas covered trail wagons drawn by six burros, had just come in from the country. Some swarthy Mexicans, in their picturesque sombreros, were unloading the carts, making more haste than usual, as it was nearly time for the freight train. One of them, a tall, handsome young fellow, occasionally glanced up to the brow of the hill where Thomassie, the old Parroco's cook, a graceful slender figure, stood at the pump, her shapely brown arms and hands lifted high above her head, as she grasped the pump handle firmly, bringing it down with regular rythmical strokes, the while her supple figure bent slightly at each downward sweep of the handle. To watch Thomassie was to see the poetry of motion, so thought the stranger, as the Mexican woman, lifting up her shining tin pails, went back to the kitchen.

The hands of the clock in the church steeple presently pointed to the hour of noon, and the whole village appeared as if asleep. Only the far off lowing of the cattle, or the call of Bob White to his mate, broke the stillness, as the stranger turned his horse toward the hills, and riding up the mountain trail, presently found a cool, shady spot where he sat down to record the story of love and life—of joy and pain and undying faith, that he had heard old Santos relate to his little grandson.

“It was some forty years ago that a little cottage stood high up among the hills, and hither had come a Senor from the North for the sake of the good air, for indeed he had the *tisis*, and his cough was bad.

“With the Senor was his wife and little boy, and his sister the Senorita Lenore. She was beautiful, the young Senorita, and holy, often I saw her at mass—I was a young man then, Caro, and it seemed to me some secret sorrow weighed on her mind. She would pray so fervently, and look so sad.

“The spring came that year, and we were out in the fields a great deal, and the Senorita walked by very often with the little boy, the Senor’s son. Oh, but I loved him, Caro. With his golden hair and blue eyes he looked like an angel of God.

“Tell me a story, Santos,” he would say, and I

told him long stories of the blessed saints, and sometimes, mounted on his little donkey, I would take him up to the mountain where the good Franciscan fathers in by-gone days had erected a shrine to our Lady. It was just a niche, cut in the stone of an abandoned quarry, and within the niche stood the figure of the Madre, that one of the Fathers who was an artist, had carved and placed there for the love of God and His Blessed Mother. Near by was a small adobe house, and next to it a shed that the quarrymen used for their tools before the place was deserted. Weeds and shrubs grew out of the crevices in the rocks, and long green lizards darted hither and thither over the stones. Back of the quarry was a stream of water that lower down became the river, and so it was that we always called this shrine 'Our Lady of Guadalupe.' But that you know, Caro.

"We used to sit there, the boy and I—they called him the 'Little Son' at home—and often he would jump up and pick bunches of the wild flowers that grew everywhere, and lay them on the shrine of our Blessed Lady.

"I worked for his father in those days, a good master he was—God rest his soul—and liberal; but never the same after the Senorita died. But now I am anticipating.

"It was one day in the month of the Holy Angeles,

Rosary Sunday had come and gone, the harvest was good, and the men and women had been out in the fields all day picking cotton. It was toward evening when the train from the city came in, and I had gone to the station to look for a package my master expected; but something else came by that train, Caro.

"I saw him at once, a handsome man, with a face that went to the heart of you, and a voice clear and full. I heard him ask for the Senor, and I stepped forward and told him I was the Senor's man. He smiled, as I took his bag and we mounted the hill together. He asked me about the country and harvest, and from that day we were good friends.

"As we drew near the house, the little master espied us and raised a shout. It had rained that night and the ground was not yet dry, so as he jumped off the gallery he slipped and fell in the mud, and I picked him up, looking like a glorious bespattered angel. He struggled to his feet and ran toward the young Senor, but he did not seem to see him, though I found afterward he loved children—and then I turned and saw the Senorita Lenore.

"She stood up on the gallery, dressed all in some soft white stuff, with the evening sun behind her, shining like a flame; and in her eyes was the most tender light, like the blue in the sky after the sun goes down.



“‘John,’ she said, and the Senor advanced, straight and tall, with his hat in his hand, and he bent low as if he revered her, and what followed I did not hear, for I turned and went quickly away.

“And then came many days, when everyone seemed happy. My master brightened up, and the good Senora, his wife, seemed almost free from care, while the little master was with the young Senor everywhere.

“But best of all, it was to see the Senorita Lenore. On Sundays he went with her to Mass, and I would watch her pure face and her clasped hands raised in prayer. I knew all her prayers were for him.

“In those days I am afraid God and the Blessed Mother had very few Paters and Aves from me when I knelt at Mass, and yet I think all that time my heart was one great prayer.

“There came one day, the last of October, when the myriads of holy angels were just about to give place to the great company of the blessed Saints—‘Hallow E’en,’ the Senor Americano called it—and indeed it was a hallowed night. That morning my little master wanted to ride up the mountain on his donkey. It was only one of many trips around the country, he on his donkey and I on foot, which we took together. We started off with the sun shining and the birds singing, so gay we were that we did not

notice the sun had presently disappeared, and some dark clouds had risen on the horizon. It was only when we were within sight of the deserted hut, near the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, that I saw a storm was coming, and I was only thankful on my little master's account that we could so easily have a safe shelter. I whipped up the donkey, who did not require much urging this time, and in a moment we were under the shed, and then the heavens opened and down came the rain in a torrent. I knew the hut was locked, and as the shed was wide and gave us a shelter from the rain, I decided to stay there and it was well that I did, as you will see, Caro.

"The shed was built up close to the abandoned hut, but there was no window on that side. On the farther wall, that faced the path up the mountain, was a door and two windows, the door being locked, as I said. I think we had only been under the shed about two minutes when I was surprised to hear a noise, as of a window being raised, and then the sound of voices, mingled with the rustle of skirts, and then I made out that it was the Senorita Lenore, and the young visitor Senor John. 'Give me your hand,' he said, and then followed a noise of climbing and presently they were both through the window and in the hut.

" 'At least we are safe here from a wetting,' said

the Senorita, 'another five minutes and we would both have been drenched to the skin.' A peal of thunder just then drowned their voices, and the lightning flashed so wildly that I crossed myself, and the little master who was at the other end of the long shed clasped his hands as if in prayer, though he was ever a brave boy. I saw that he had not heard the voices, so I went over and joined him, as indeed I did not want to hear any more myself if I could help it. I knew those two had something to settle with each other, and some instinct told me that now was the time. Presently the thunder died down, and my little master got drowsy, so taking the blanket off the donkey I laid it on the ground and he was soon asleep. The rain fell steadily and I was getting drowsy myself when a window was raised on the side of the hut overlooking the valley, and now the voices reached me plainly and I could not get away from them without making my presence known.

" 'Think twice, Lenore,' he said. 'I have come far to see you; but if your answer is not ready I will go away and come again.'

" 'No, it must be settled now,' she answered. 'I have dallied too long with temptation. I hoped and I prayed that faith would come to you, but it has not come, and I cannot and will not marry a man who believes nothing.'

" 'You do not love me,' he said.

"She took a step nearer to him, only a step, and then paused. 'I love you so much,' she breathed, in a low, passionate, intense voice, 'that it is like madness. Against my love for you I may be, and am, powerless, but not against the indulgence of it.'

" 'Ah, Lenore,' he answered, 'think how happy we can be. I shall never interfere with your religion; in all that concerns it you will be free. But as regards my own position I have to tell you the truth. I have gone with you to church so as to be near you, but I cannot accept baptism without being a dishonest man. But think,' he urged, as she said nothing, 'how little that matters, after all. Look around in the world; how many you see who are happy without religion, and who lead useful lives.'

"Then the Senorita's sweet voice spoke again, so sad it was and almost hopeless. 'They have nothing to lose,' she said, 'because they have never known possession. With us it is different. Our faith is a pearl beyond price. How could you and I be one if we were not one in that religion which is above all and beyond all to me?'

" 'You should be a nun,' was his answer.

" 'No, John,' she said, very low, 'this divine love, high and eternal, can exist in the world. Some day you will know it, but not now. To urge me any

further is useless. Now I am very weary and would bid you go.'

" 'Not to leave you alone here, Lenore.'

" 'Yes, she replied; 'no harm can happen to me. I would have a little time to pray at the shrine of our Lady, and then I can go home alone. I often came here by myself in the days before you came.'

"Her voice trembled and almost broke, but I seemed to feel that she pulled herself together, like the proud, brave woman she was; as to the young Senor, he was divided between love and pain.

" 'If I do not believe in your God, Lenore,' he said, 'I believe in you,' and then he seemed to kneel down at her feet, and I, as it were, saw her lay her white hand on his dark head.

" 'Heaven bless you, my love,' she said, 'and grant you that faith which is above all, and beyond all gifts.'

" 'Amen,' he answered, much to my surprise, and then he leaped from the window, and I heard his rapid steps down the mountain trail, as if his only safety lay in flight.

"But the poor Senorita! Now, that he was gone, her strength seemed to leave her. I heard her lie down on the bare earth of the hut.

" 'O my God!' she moaned, 'I would give my life to win his soul.'

"I knew by the silence that followed that she was praying, and then I remembered that to reach the shrine of our Lady, he must pass the shed, and would see me there, so I knew I must leave at once. The rain had ceased. Though my little master still slept, I gathered him up in my arms, and taking the donkey by the bridle, we left the quarry as softly as possible. I do not think the young Senorita heard us; but then—I never knew.

"Something urged me to get home as quickly as possible, and leaving my young master, I started back to the quarry with the donkey, thinking to meet the Senorita as if by accident.

"I would I did not have to relate what follows, Caro, but so it was, and the good God knew what was best. I was only at the foot of the trail when I saw another storm was coming up, such as often happens in these regions, when one fierce disturbance of the elements will follow on the heels of another. I hurried on, but the storm broke, with ten times more fury than the other, the donkey, too, was frightened, and needed repeated blows to urge him on. Then I heard a sound behind me of a rapid springing step that seemed to take no heed of the rain, or to be held back by the wind.

" 'Santos,' he shouted, as he came near—'Santos,' and then he told me, what I already knew—that the

Senorita was up there on the mountain, alone in the fearful storm.

"It was just as we got to the top of the trail that we saw we were too late, there was a bewildering peal of thunder, and then flash after flash of vivid light, that seemed to play all around the shrine of the Madre Santisima to which clung a slender white robed figure, and when it passed, and we sprang forward, we saw her lying there—dead.

"Alas! the poor Senor, he knelt down with the calmness of despair, feeling her heart and pulse and rubbing her hand, while all the time I knew it was useless. There were no marks on her lovely face that in death seemed more pure and holy than ever like some great Saint of God; but on the back of her head and neck was a scar, and the lightning had scorched her dress. Death had come instantly and without conscious pain.

"We bore her home and laid her away to the chanting of the *Alleluia* and the *De Profundis*. So beautiful she looked, Caro! Her tender hands clasped, as if somewhere her soul were interceding for him she so loved.

And the young Senor? Ah, yes? he became a loyal Catholic, and a great priest. In the cities he worked, among the poor, the sick, the unfortunate; and thousands came to hear him when he raised his voice to comfort, to warn, to command;

for indeed he spoke as one who knew all our sorrow, as one who had himself felt the wound-prints of Christ, and the sword that pierced the heart of the Blessed Mother. Often at night when I am out on the plain, and repose does not come, for I am old and cannot sleep as in my youth, I look up at the shining firmament, whose vast dome forms my canopy, and sometimes it seems as if all the stars left their orbit, and circled in one pure brilliant arc, and within this magic circle, now faint and shadowy, and anon clear to view, will appear the divinely tender face of the Mother of Sorrows, and near her—sorrowful no more, but united for time and eternity—the Senor, Padre John, and his lost love, the Senorita Lenore.”



## A ROMANCE OF THE SAN RAFAEL CANON.

(This story is related by an old Mexican to his little grandson.)

You asked me to tell you a story, little one. What shall it be? About the San Rafael Canon! Well, let me sit down with my pipe before I begin; for I am old, and my thoughts do not come as rapidly as they did when I was twenty years.

Yes, it was seventy years ago, and I was a young man, tall and strong, and able to work from early dawn until the purple shadows deepened on the hills, and twilight descended, bringing the soft dark mysterious night that enfolded us in her embrace. I thought not of it then, Caro, but it is a blessed thing to rest from toil.

It was the Senor Joseph Waring I worked for; tending the great herds of cattle that roamed over his rancho. A magnificent place it was, enclosing miles of fine rolling country, and on the very brow of the steep cliff above the river's bank, stood the hacienda where the senor lived alone—until—but I am anticipating, Caro. It was a long, low Mexican building that had been put up by the Mission Fathers and then had almost crumbled to ruins; but the senor bought it with the land, and had it restored, and there he lived, making it such a home as was

the wonder of all the country, when I was no older than you are now, little one. The broad gallery, fifteen feet wide, ran out over the cliff, and from here you could see up and down the lovely river, and for miles over the country to the distant blue hills that extended range on range, as far as the eye could reach.

I was ten years old when the senor came to Texas. He had been a great student in Dublin, they said, but his health broke down and then he came to our beautiful country where men live so long they forget how old they are, Caro.

You know my age, you say, ninety years! That is nothing, little one: old Jose Miguel was a young man when I was born, and he still smokes a pipe with me when we talk over the years gone by. But the senor—oh yes—he meant to go home again some day; but he never did. After ten years he was sound and strong and might have gone back to his own country to become the great lawyer he meant to have been; but by that time he had no wish to go. I heard him tell the Padre that the magic enchantment of our soft, southern land had enchained him; and that his roots were set too deep in the soil to be easily transplanted again. So I grew up on his rancho where, my father worked before me, and where we all loved the senor; for such a good master

he was. Not one of us but would have moved heaven and earth to serve him, Caro. I think the master grew rich, he built houses and made good roads, and best of all, he restored the church that the Padres had built over a hundred years ago. Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe it was called. It stood then, as it does now, mellow with age, half-covered with vine and with its frescoes dimmed by time; but beautiful! Many came from afar to visit the shrine of our Lady, where the senor had placed a lovely marble figure of the Blessed Mother and her Son, before which a light was always burning; in thanksgiving for his own recovery, the senor said.

And the Parroco, the good Padre Paul. Ah, now I come to our story, Caro. A strange history was his: when a little one, an infant, he had been found floating in a box on the river. That was the feast of the Conversion of the Blessed Apostle Paul, and the good people who discovered him and took him home, Catholics they were, adopted him, being childless, and named him for the great Saint.

Who he was no one had ever been able to find out, but he grew up and became a priest, and then the senor, whose good friend he was, got him appointed to our Lady of Guadalupe. Ah! those two were friends even to the communing of their souls. Often in the evening twilight, when my work was done,

## A ROMANCE OF SAN RAFAEL, CANON 99

I would see the Padre come walking up the path that bordered the cliff, and always there was the welcome for him from the senor, who loved him as the sweet singer David loved Jonathan.

Was that the only love? you ask. Did not the senor, with his youth and his wealth and his good looks care for some lovely senorita? Ah! little one, you are too young for your mind to run on such things. But you *want* to know! Well, have it as you will; for now she rises before me, the senorita who came to the hacienda in the spring time of her youth, and who lived there, happy and honored, many years, as the senor's wife.

Five miles she lived from the Waring rancho, with her father and sister and three brothers, and the English governess, the Senora Wentworth, who had cared for the motherless children since their own mother died. It was the whole country that loved the English senora; never a case of illness or sorrow that she did not come forward with the heart to comfort and the skill to relieve, that made her seem to us like a saint of God. The good young Padre Paul often had recourse to her, and many a time I have seen them come out of some miserable hut where I would not have wanted your grandmother to go, Caro.

It was a mixed household at the Godone hacienda;

the Doctor—he was called Dr. Godone—though his chief employment was cultivating cotton, of which he had thousands of acres, was an Italiano, and at the time I am telling, he had been twenty years in Texas. He married a Spanish lady, so his children, though all Americanos by birth, had both the Italian and Spanish names. Three boys, Joachim, Roberto and Rafael, and the two young señoritas, Candita and Beatrice.

The youngest señorita was but fifteen years old at this time, and the other—the Señorita Candita—ah, Madre Santísima! if she had not been born of the sunset and starlight, the sparkle of the river and the sweet odor of the pomegranate, she would have been just eighteen years old.

So it was one spring, the month of the Blessed Madre, that I heard Padre Paul tell the señor that a strange woman had come to the village, in whom he was much interested. Very ill she had been, alone in a little hut near the river's bank, and the Padre, who was afraid of the fever for the rest of his flock, sent for the doctor and then came to tell the master. "I can't get anything out of her," I heard him say, "beyond the fact that she has been acting as *lavan-dera* at a hotel near the Mexican border. She has not a pleasant face, and in her delirium she has said a great many strange things."

## A ROMANCE OF SAN RAFAEL, CANON 101

"When she is better we may find something out," replied the master; "until then let old Maria take all possible care of her. As long as the doctor says the fever is not contagious there is no danger."

Now I was young still, Caro, and curious, and I remembered that old Maria was my mother's own aunt, so I determined to try and find out what I could; but work was plentiful that week, and it was not until several days later that one evening I got away from the rancho, and started down the cliff walk to the village. I reached the little hut—a miserable broken down place it was—and seeing no signs of old Maria I concluded she had gone home, and was just going further up the river to find her, when the door of the hut opened, and the woman stepped out. I was hiding behind a tall pecan tree, where she could not see me; but the moon was at the full, so that I saw her, and all in a moment I knew who it was.

Two years before, Caro, there had been a horrible murder in the city, and a Mexican, one Dario Cavaros was known to have committed the crime. He was never found, but his portrait and that of his wife was posted up everywhere. The woman had a deep scar across the top of her forehead, close to the roots of her hair, which she was said to keep covered by drawing the hair low down on her brow. It was this

face, the scar in full view, that I was looking at now—Lupe Cavaros beyond a doubt. Why had not the Padre recognized her?

So interested was I that I leaned forward and stumped my foot against the tree; the woman heard and looked in my direction, just as I hastily withdrew.

"Is that you, Dario?" she said, softly, in our Spanish dialect. Here was confirmation sure, and I scarcely breathed, fearing she would advance; but receiving no answer she presently withdrew into the hut, and I made haste to slip away. What were they doing here, the woman, and that villain Dario? They boded no good to our peaceful little village I knew.

Should I tell the master? No, I decided not. I wanted the glory, if glory there was, of unravelling the mystery myself.

But I was not through with the revelations of that night, Caro. Reaching home I found Padre Paul on the gallery with the master, and they were talking. As I passed something the Padre said about the woman made me listen intently while I busied myself around the house. I knew well the master, who was ever indulgent to me, would not send me away.

"The woman was out of her head all last night,"

said the Padre. "Old Maria was so frightened, she sent her grandson for me; and when I arrived, Waring, the strangest thing happened: the woman looked at me and then shrank away as if in mortal fear."

"It is the child," she said, "such a lovely child! 'Curse it,' said Dario, and then he stole it, the poor baby, and drowned it in the river, oh my God! my God!"

"She said a great deal more in the same strain," said the Padre, "all the while showing such fear of me. You will be amused, Waring, but do you suppose that woman is my mother?"

Lupe Cavaros the Parroco's mother! I could have laughed aloud. I thought of Padre Paul's fair, handsome face, his splendid figure and firm tread, the face and mien of a born patrician you may be sure, little one, and then all of a sudden it flashed on me that some where, some how, I had seen some one who looked like him, but where? My mind then was too confused to say, but it was later that I knew! Not the son of Dario and Lupe, that I was sure of now, the former was pure Mexican, the woman of European descent; but never could she have been of the same rank as Padre Paul.

I moved away from the gallery and was about going to my quarters for the night when the sound of carriage wheels greeted my ear, and I came forward



just as the Senor Doctor Godone drove inside the gate that encircled the hacienda; and with him was the Senora Wentworth and the fair young Senorita Candita.

"Hold the horses, Santos," said my Master, and so I saw all that passed. The sweet English senora, with her fair, pale face, that we all loved so well, was the first to alight. She moved away with the Padre, while the master lingered to assist the senorita.

I saw the senorita's glorious eyes flash and smile at him, and I heard a tone in his voice that was new, as he bade her welcome.

"I will leave the ladies here for half an hour," said the Doctor, "while I despatch an errand further up the road," so he drove away, and I, forgetting myself, stood there like the *bobo* I was, looking at those two.

"Will you come to the orchard?" said the senor, who seemed for all the world unconscious of my presence, "the peaches are ripening, and we may find some I can give you."

So they moved away, and I sat down on a nearby stone waiting for the wagon to return so I could close and fasten the gate for the night.

But I seemed to be with the two who were now in the orchard. How abundant the fast ripening fruit was! How delicious the lingering twilight, laden

with the thousand and one smells of earth and trees, and the soft air that had been touched all day by the warm sun. I thought of the senorita, all fire and sweetness; surely the master must tell her of his love now. Not now after all; for even as I struck a flint to light my pipe, on the still night air came the report of a pistol, that sent me flying toward the cliff from whence the sound had come.

Startled, alarmed, the master and the senorita and several of the men were crowding on the gallery almost as soon as I reached there, all of us talking at once. It was the Padre Paul who first made himself heard.

"Some one fired a shot at Mrs. Wentworth," he said; "the bullet passed close to her head, and is in that post," pointing to a hole in one of the pillars.

"Santos, and you Pietro and Jose," said the master, "scour the cliffs," and we were gone almost as soon as he spoke. But we found nothing; the growth of shrubs was so thick that once the shot had been fired, a skillful climber could beat a retreat without being discovered, especially in the deepening twilight. By whom was the shot fired? Like a flash the answer came to me—Dario, the convict; but why he had aimed for the Senora Wentworth, the good God alone knew.

I said nothing; but I determined to get to the bottom of it. Two weeks passed, during which the

master had sent to the city for a detective to work on the case. Then fresh excitement was occasioned by the sudden and mysterious disappearance of the woman Lupe. She stole away one dark night after having promised the good Padre that she would see the Senora Wentworth on the morrow, he being anxious to bring the woman under the sweet senora's influence. I must not forget, Caro, that the woman gave her name as Susana, which confirmed me in my idea that some dark plot was on foot. The Padre and the master questioned old Maria, who had been nursing the sick woman. She, Maria, had seen the woman Susana the night before, about sun down, and had been told she need not come again, as she, Susana, was better, and anyway the senora from the Godone rancho was coming to see her and take care of her.

"Maria was shaken out of her usual stolidity," I heard the master say, "but even that unusual occurrence in a Mexican did not throw any light on the mystery."

Well, all Mexicans were not as old Maria, Caro, and I began to form a plan which I thought would lead to the finding of those two, in hiding somewhere not far away. One night, the heat it was excessive, drove me out of my low-roofed adobe, so taking a blanket, I rolled myself up in it, and lay down under a tree.

## A ROMANCE OF SAN RAFAEL, CANON 107

There was no moon, but the stars were magnificent, the vast dome of the heavens seemed to have a thousand eyes turned toward the earth. How easy for the myriads of shining ones up above to look down through these windows of light, and search every dark corner of the world, and lay bare every evil deed. No wonder that with such millions of windows in the heavens the blessed saints could know all that passes here below. So I lay and thought, and then I must have slept and dreamed. How long I slept I do not know, but I awoke suddenly with a start, the wind was rustling in the trees, and the sound seemed like the whisper of some saint in my ear; for I sat up, and like a lightning flash the thought came to me, "search the San Rafael Canon!" Why had not I thought of it before. I rolled myself up in my blanket again, and considered. Yes, there they must be. I had heard the master say he could not understand how the woman had got away without being seen anywhere. No train left that night, not even a freight, and if she had started to walk she must have been seen on the way. "To-morrow," I thought, so I went to sleep again, resting soundly until the first rosy dawn broke over the distant blue hills.

. . . . .  
You are afraid there is not going to be a happy end-

ing to this story, little one, wait and see! The blessed saints put not that idea into my head about the San Rafael Canon for nothing. What, you think Lupe and Dario are hiding in the Canon! Now you rogue, you must not anticipate old Santos, he must tell this story his own way. It was the good master who gave me all the afternoon free from work the next day.

"Have it as you will, Santos," he said, "you have worked hard for weeks; doubtlessly you rascal, you want to go up the river and see the fair Juanita."

Then I laughed; for, yes! I was courting your grandmother then, Caro.

But it was not to see Juanita that I had asked for a holiday; but to search the canon. You know the place, Caro. High rocky cliffs on each side of what was once a branch of the river, but long since dried up. The cliffs extended then as they do now, for about a quarter of a mile, and within this space stood gigantic boulders of rock, fine old trees, and luxuriant vegetation that ran riot; what was once the river's bed, was now a rough wagon path. The whole spot was lonely, wild and romantic, fit hiding place for any one who shunned pursuit. As I entered the canon, the birds overhead sang magnificently, and the soft southern wind rustled through the trees: nature that day was fair and beautiful, fraught with

some divine whispering of a more glorious and eternal spring.

I struck off from the main path, and began to advance cautiously. I was barefooted, and long experience had made me skillful in making my way without a sound. After advancing in this manner for some distance, I sat down under a high ledge of rock to consider my plans. If the man and woman were there they must be, I decided, very near the exit of the canon, where a series of high boulders, and an unusually thick growth of shrubs and trees, would make a better hiding place than the lower end, where I now was, and where it was more open. I was just about to advance when the sound of voices made me fall down behind the ledge of rock, almost breathless for fear of discovery. In a second's time I gave a sigh of relief—it was the master and the Senorita Candita, and peeping cautiously around the corner of the rock, I saw them advancing slowly, oblivious to all the world but their two selves, and then I remembered that the Godone hacienda was very near.

Ah! the beautiful senorita! She was dressed all in some soft white stuff, and on her head was a wide brimmed sombrero of Mexican straw, shading her peerless face from the sun, the while her starry eyes looked up at the master. I am old now, Caro; but

it quickens my heart to think of her as she looked that day. The master, too, was attired all in white, and on his arm he held a basket in which the senorita was placing some white blossoms that grew nowhere so well as in the cool, shady canon.

"How lovely these will be for the *fiesta*," said the senorita.

"The feast of Our Lady Help of Christians," said the master. "How little we think, in these times of peace, of what the Christians suffered from the Turks."

"No," said the senorita, "we have nothing here like that."

"Something worse," I thought, thinking of Dario.

"Father Paul will be delighted," continued the senorita. "Ah!" and she paused, "listen to that bird."

Overhead Bob White began calling to his mate; the sun, just vanishing behind the western cliff, touched the senorita's dark hair; the master put down the basket and commenced helping her pick the blossoms. Somehow the two pair of hands became entangled, and the flowers were forgotten.

"Carissima," he said, and then reverently, tenderly he commenced telling her the story ever old, ever new, which I waited not to hear to the end. Softly I arose and stole away; in my heart such joy for the

## A ROMANCE OF SAN RAFAEL, CANON 111

master that I felt nothing deeper, even when I won your grandmother, Caro.

. . . . .

Half an hour later found me near the other end of the canon, my progress having been necessarily slow for fear of discovery.

It was not for me, after all, little one, to solve the great mystery; but I was there and saw it all, so you can believe old Santos when he tells you what happened now.

I was creeping along on hands and knees, heedless of the coarse grass and brambles, when the sound of carriage wheels broke the silence, and parting some bushes with my hands, I saw the Padre drive by with the Senora Wentworth. I guessed all at once that she had been with him on some errand of mercy, and that he was taking her home; so there we all were in the canon, and the very air was still, as if all nature dreaded the tragedy that was to come.

It seemed only a second later that the report of a gun echoed on the air, followed instantly by the sharp firing of a pistol; the scream of a woman and confused voices, all mingled into one, the while the noise of the firearms went echoing through the canon.

I sprang to my feet and commenced to run, just as the master and the senorita dashed past me. But I was there first, after all. On the ground, dead, lay



the man, Dario Cavaros, while near by stood the detective the master had summoned from the city, a smoking revolver in his hand.

"Lupe Cavaros," I heard the Senora Wentworth say—"Lupe Cavaros, you here! And why has Dario made two attempts on my life?"

The woman who had uttered the scream was on her knees by the dead man, rocking back and forth, but at the sound of the senora's voice she ceased her wailing and arose to her feet. Perfectly quiet now, she turned to the Senora Wentworth who stood there, supported by the Padre, her sweet, pale face and startled eyes showing what a shock she had received.

"You call me Lupe Cavaros," the woman said, "and you are right. I am Lupe Cavaros, and that man—pointing to the Padre Paul with an almost dramatic gesture—that man—though you know it not—*is your son.*"

The Master, the Padre and the Senorita Candita all sprang forward with a cry, but the poor senora could bear no more, and I was just in time to catch her as she fainted.

. . . . .

Yes, little one, it was all too wonderful, the Padre was the dear senora's son. She, who, until then, had never known that she had a living child. Years

## A ROMANCE OF SAN RAFAEL, CANON 113

ago the woman, Lupe, had lived with the senora; and Dairo, that wicked one, was the Senor Wentworth's overseer. There was a quarrel, and Dario vowed vengeance. Then the senor was away and the little one, Padre Paul, was born; the woman Lupe, threatened by Dario, gave the child to him, and he placed it in a box and sent it adrift on the river.

The poor senora thought her child had been born dead, and shortly after the Senor Wentworth returned, he was taken ill with a fever and died. So the dear senora, bereft of husband and home, had to work, and in course of time, she came to the Godone hacienda and the good God brought Padre Paul to the same country; truly His ways are marvellous.

The wretch, Dario, carried his hatred of the husband to the wife, and it was he, of course, who had tried to shoot her from the cliff near the master's hacienda. The gun I had heard in the canon was his, aimed for the senora, but the woman, Lupe, had knocked it upward, just as he fired, and at the same moment the detective, who was hiding near by, also fired to save the senora's life, killing the man instantly. And so it was—a tragedy and two romances all within one hour, Caro.

. . . . .

It was the feast of Our Lady Help of Christians, the

next day when we all assembled for the early Mass. What glad and thankful hearts we had, you can well imagine, little one. I knelt before the altar of the Blessed Mother. Oh! it was heaped high with the pure white blossoms. Surely, the Madre must know all, I thought, all that the Senora Wentworth felt. She, the Blessed Madre, who speaks to all glad or sorrowing hearts of the pain and the glory of her own divine motherhood.

## THE CHRIST CHILD OF NORUMBEGA.\*

### CHAPTER I.

"It is a fair city," he said, "with high towers and pillars in front of the houses of silver and crystal. In another hour probably we can see it, for it is visible far out at sea."

"And our Norsemen wear warm furs?" she queried, "and have jewels of gold and rubies and pearls?"

"Furs and gold in plenty," he answered, "and the fishing? We take in great shoals of fish, herring and cod even better than what we had in Scandinavia."

She looked up at the sky, and drew her furs closer around her.

"There are clouds," she said, "and, listen, the wind is rising. There is a storm coming, Eric."

He glanced at the distant horizon, and nodded.

"Go below," he said. "From the look of the sky something unusual is coming."

In another hour a terrific storm was blowing the

\*Norumbega was a name given by early explorers and map makers of various portions of the East Coast of North America, and also to a river and mythical city. Verragano in 1529 said it was on the New England Coast. Mercator in 1541 located it as having been near the Hudson River. But the preponderance of opinion places it somewhere between Cape Breton and Florida. An English sailor, who sailed with Sir John Hawkins in 1568, speaks of having heard of it as a wonderful city, with pillars and towers of silver and crystal. The author of this tale has taken a poet's license, and placed Norumbega in Rhode Island, where, at Newport, R. I., is the old stone mill, which some legends ascribe to the Vikings of the Tenth Century.

small bark toward the shore, the temperature fell lower and lower, and a blinding snowstorm set in. The ship, which had sailed hundreds of miles, from the Norwegian coast, and which was now only ten miles from the rockbound shores of Norumbega, was in more serious danger than at any time on her long voyage. Eric, the Norseman, who knew the coast well, remained on deck with the half dozen sailors who composed his crew, while in the cabin the young wife, whom he had gone back to Scandinavia a year ago to bring out to the far Western world, paced back and forth with her babe in her arms. The fair head of the mother bent over the golden head of the sleeping child. Used to the excitement and dangers of the sea from earliest childhood, she felt little fear though she knew the storm was of unusual severity.

An hour passed and darkness descended, and still Eric and his Norse sailors remained on deck. The waves and spray that dashed over the ship froze into icicles, and a heavy ice coating settled on spars, mast and ropes, until it might have been a crystal ship that was riding over the wild Atlantic.

One by one the men came to the cabin for the hot beverage that Tycha had ready for them; through the long night she was up, ready to minister to their needs, while the child slept. It was just when dawn was breaking at seven o'clock the next morning that

the Viking's ship struck on a rock, that was scarcely an island, in the great waste of waters. Although they knew it not they were less than a quarter of a mile from the shore; but the blinding snow-storm completely shut out everything from their sight.

The terrible pounding of their ship on the rocks warned the experienced Norsemen that their boat was doomed. There was no hope that the stoutest timbers could long withstand such a strain. Every man worked rapidly and quickly, and presently Eric crossed the deck, his arm around his wife to keep her from falling on its slippery surface.

The ship had listed heavily to one side, making it extremely difficult to climb over her rails to the rocks below; but with infinite care the tall Norseman assisted the woman and her child to land, and presently she had reached a nook in the rocks where there was some shelter from the fierce wind. The men worked heroically, carrying food, furs, and everything they were likely to need, from the ship to the small plateau of rocks, which was their only hope of escape from otherwise certain death. If the snow would cease and they could take their bearings, it might be possible to make a raft, and escape in safety to the shore, which they knew must be somewhere westward of their small island.

But now a new terror confronted them. The

tide was rising rapidly. Would their landing place be entirely submerged at high tide? In another fifteen minutes the water was washing over all the rocks except the highest one on which they were now huddled together. To return to the ship would be madness—already they could hear the creaking of timbers, showing it was going to pieces.

Suddenly Eric paused in his work and listened. "Do you hear anything, Harold?" he said, addressing a hardy young Norseman who was working with a will. The other bent his head, and placed his hand behind his ear.

"Surf," he answered. "I hear it booming on the shore. We must be very near land."

"So I thought," said the other. "If the tide—" He glanced down as he spoke; the water was now lapping their feet.

He looked at Tycha, and caught the young mother's eye.

"The child," she said, "we must save him, Eric, if land is near."

The water was now washing over their feet. To make a raft large enough to hold them all was impossible—there was no time—but the little one—the child?

One glance the young Norseman gave, first at the snow-laden air, then at the rising waters and the sky,

the next moment he was leaping from the rocks to the deck of the ship; in a second he had returned with a small board and some rope, over his shoulders was a heavy fur robe.

Quickly he laid the fur on the piece of wood that was long, narrow and shaped on one end in a point. Placing the child on this small raft he wrapped the fur around him, finishing by lashing him to the board with the rope.

"It is a chance," he said.

"But to stay here means death, anyway. If he reaches the shore safely, he will be found and adopted by someone among our good Norumbegans."

Tycha was past speaking. In an agony she knelt down among the jagged rocks, with the icy and fast-rising waters reaching almost to her waist. Her husband lifted the tiny raft with its precious burden, and giving his powerful arms a backward swing, shot the frail craft far out over the tumbling waters that were setting so swiftly toward the shore. At the same moment there was a crash of rending timbers as the staunch Viking ship went to pieces on the rock; but this Tycha seemed neither to see nor hear. One cry rose from her heart. It was four days before Christmas. Would not the Christ Child save her baby?

\* \* \* \* \*

The sun, which was shining magnificently on the



frozen snow, lit up also the fair pillars and pinnacles of the City of Norumbega, which stretched for three quarters of a mile along the coast. Down through one of the narrow streets of the city came a boy and a girl of about twelve, warmly wrapped in furs from head to foot. On their feet were skids, or snow runners. Reaching the shore they turned northward and were soon flying over the hard frozen snow. Presently the boy began to sing the Raven song from the Edda, which relates the death of Baldur; but this did not please his sister.

"Cease, Ragnor," she said, "listen. I will sing something more in keeping with this glorious scene," and without more delay her clear sweet soprano voice commenced the Sun song, that breathes of love and life. The boy listened, as on they sped.

"Sing it again, Runa," he said, and without more ado she recommenced her song, assisted this time by his musical treble.

"I love the old Viking words and tunes," he said, when presently the song ceased, "although we are Christians, Runa."

"Father Rolf-Samund says our old Viking songs are good," answered the girl. "He sings them himself, as well as the Christmas hymns." She broke into song again, as she spoke. Was it the clear, buoyant air, touched with such marvellous sunshine,

that brought the music to her soul and voice? Or, was it the thought of the mystic past, that vast cloud country—that dreamland of fairy imagery, peopled with the shadowy figures of their Scandinavian heroes, that stirred her eager young heart? On they sped, and had traveled five miles, when suddenly, at a bend in the coastline they came in sight of an old stone mill that stood on a slight eminence above the shore. Toward this point they flew, and presently the girl, who was a little in advance of her brother, uttered an exclamation.

“Quick, Rangor,” she said. “Here is treasure cast up by the sea!”

She got down on her knees in the frozen snow as she spoke. Just inside the open arches of the old mill lay a board to which was tied a bundle in a heavy robe of fur. It was the boy who undid the knots of the rope, and the girl who unwound the fur robe, and then simultaneously both uttered a cry. Within the wrappings was a beautiful child of about ten months. Was it dead or asleep? Hastily covering the infant up again to protect it from the cold, Runa arose to her feet with the little bundle in her arms.

“Around that bluff,” she said, “lives old Vaftha. How fortunate! She is skilled in nursing. We will take the child to her at once, Rangor.”

In another moment they were at the door of old

Vaftha's hut, and were knocking loudly for admission. The door opened and a wrinkled old Norsewoman, with eyes that were still as blue as the sea, and cheeks like a winter apple, stood before them.

She knew the twins, children of the Borgmastare of Norumbega, well; and flung open wide the low door. "Welcome, welcome," she said, and without any delay Runa explained her errand, and laid the baby on the old woman's lap, and then stood by, eager, expectant, as Vaftha examined it carefully.

"It is not dead," she said presently, "only numb from the cold and from being lashed to the board. It is a strong, healthy child; but surely it is a miracle it ever reached the shore alive."

Quickly and skilfully the old Norsewoman set about restoring the frozen baby, and in an hour her efforts were rewarded; the little one stretched its limbs, and uttered a cry.

"I will feed him now," said Vaftha, "a little warm milk, my children, and sleep, and then the babe will be well."

It was even as she said. In another hour the infant was in a deep, healthy sleep, a pink flush on its fair skin, around its head an aureole of golden hair.

Old Vaftha was swaying back and forth with the child in her arms, crooning a Norse lullaby. To her mind, half Christian, half Pagan, the infant, so sud-

denly cast near her door, seemed more divine than human.

"It is the Christ-Child," she said. "Listen, my little one, no man-made child could have lived in that storm last night, nor could any human child have breathed under this heavy fur robe. Trust old Vaftha that it is the Christ-Child."

Runa had started back, one finger on her lips; the next moment she flew across the room to her brother.

"Ragnor," she said, "Ragnor, listen to me. Father Rolf-Samund wants a Christ Child for the Nativity play on Christmas Eve. We will take this baby. We found him and he belongs to us."

"Yes," said the boy.

"It would be better to leave him here for tonight with Vaftha," continued the girl. "Tomorrow we will send Ivar Thoresen for him, and on Christmas Eve we will take him to the church. Meantime you can go and tell Father Rolf-Samund that we have a Christ-Child; but don't say where, or how, we got it."

"Why not?" asked the boy.

"Oh, you are stupid!" said the girl. "He will tell us it has been cast from some ship and that we must look for the parents; and then we would have to give him up before Christmas. We will do all that afterward, and, meanwhile, keep the most beautiful Christ-Child in the world. You never saw such a

beautiful one, Ragnor, such blue eyes and golden hair, and little limbs like marble."

"All right," said the boy, "of course, as you are to be the Blessed Mother and I am to be St. Joseph, we want the most beautiful Christ-Child we can find. I'll help you all I can, Runa."

With a few words to the old Norse woman the brother and sister put on their skids and were soon speeding down the coast in the light of the early afternoon sun that now was low on the horizon.

## CHAPTER II.

The Borgmastare of Norumbega, Sigurd Haarfagr, stood between the silver and crystal pillars of his house and glanced up the road through the dusk. "They are late," he said, "and the daemring\* deepens but there is no wind, and soon the moon will shine; besides the two of them together are safer than one alone." With another glance up and down the long street he returned in doors and settled himself in a comfortable chair to await his children's return.

Half an hour later Runa and Ragnor came racing down the long street of the city. The moon, which had risen, was now shining magnificently, throwing into strong relief the two splendid crystal and silver spires of the great Cathedral of Norumbega. On sped the young Vikings as fast as their snow-runners

\*Twilight.

would carry them, their wild Northern blood reveling in the keen frosty air. Visions of the Christmas play, of the great Christ's tree, and of her own role as Mary the Holy Maid floated through Runa's mind. Only two days more, and then—!

\* \* \* \* \*

Two figures, a tall fair man and a short dark one, stood on the shore near the old stone mill. Both were Norsemen; but the short dark man showed his Pictish origin in his color and build. It was the year 1085. Olaf Trygvasson had introduced Christianity into Norway between 995 and 1000. He was succeeded by Olaf the Saint, who was a missionary, as well as a king, and whose descendants ruled over Norway, and over the far-off lands on the eastern coasts of what is now North America. Here the Vikings had built a splendid city known as Norumbega. The wild Scandinavian blood had responded readily to the charm of Christianity. Were not the first followers of the Child of Bethlehem rude fishermen? Had not the Christ Himself ridden on the waves of the sea and preached from the seashore? Here was a religion as simple, and yet as sublime, as the hearts and heroic deeds of these fearless searovers.

But near the stable of Bethlehem was the Inn, whose owners had "no room" for the Holy Family; and among the pure-hearted fishermen was a Judas, and

so it will ever be. Evil mixes with goodness, as morning is followed by night.

It is night now, though the moon was cutting a path of glory through the waters of the ocean, lighting up the old gray mill and throwing deep shadows within its arches. The two men stood close to the mill, and it was the short dark man who was talking.

"I tell you, Ivar Thoresen," he said, "you must help me take the child. It belongs to Sigurd Haarfagr, and that is enough. I have sworn to be revenged on him."

The tall fair man looked irresolute.

"The maiden, Runa, sent me for the child," he answered. "'Bring him tonight, Ivar,' she said. 'Tomorrow we have the great Nativity play in the cathedral. I take the part of the Blessed Mother, and the infant at old Vaftha's is to be the Christ-Child in the play.' Then she gave me minute directions about coming here, wrapping the infant up well, and placing it in a basket on my snow-sled."

The dark man stamped his foot on the frozen snow.

"No more," he said. "You are as garrulous as an old woman, Thoresen. Now listen. I, Rudnir Grundtvig, will have that child tonight. It will go with me in my fishing boat to the far north coast. Then I will be revenged on the Borgmastare for punishing me, and saying I stole the cod and herring fisheries from Harold Borjesson."

"Which of course you know you did," said the other.

The dark man disdained to notice this thrust.

"It waxes late," he said. "I go out in my boat in an hour. You are to come with me to Vaftha's door. Ask for the child, and show your authority, and then you will accompany me to the boat and sail northward to the coast that in summer is perpetual fog."

Good intentions allied to a weak will were easily overcome by wickedness allied to strength, therefore, Ivar Thoresen was presently walking across the ice-bound shore in the wake of Rudnir Grundtvig, the untamed Viking.

But ere they had gone a hundred yards, a white figure flitted by them, and, taking up a position directly in their path, uttered a long melancholy wail, which speedily ended in the singing of the Volupsa, or Song of the Prophetess.

The two men paused, spellbound.

Now the strange figure was inviting them in the same sweet, unearthly strains to cross the rainbow bridge and take service with Baldur, the Beautiful, forever.

The dark face of Rudnir Grundtvig was ashy white in the moonlight. All the old Viking beliefs and superstitions swept over him.



Across the frozen snow and the vast Atlantic beyond his voice went echoing in mortal fear. "It is Nanna, the bride of Baldur," he said. "She has come to take us to Asgard. If we stay here we are dead men."

Of what moment now was revenge or the child. Without an instant's pause the two men fled northward, and spoke not until they were in their fishing boat and well out at sea.

Left alone the white figure paused in the moonlight and looked out across the shining waters.

"It was well done," she said, "and now I myself will take the little Christ-Child to Norumbega."

Drawing her white furs closer around her, she approached the cottage of Vaftha, and speedily succeeded in convincing her she should have possession of the child.

"He is asleep," said Vaftha, "and will sleep till morning. He is well wrapped up in furs against the cold."

The white figure made no attempt to look at the child. Carefully she cradled the precious bundle in the hollow of her arm, and set off swiftly southward along the moonlit shore to the fair city beyond. But ever and anon she looked down at the bundle safely sheltered on her breast, and soft and low she crooned a cradle song, as the mother hearts have done in all ages and countries.

It was a long walk in the full face of the wind. Ivar Thoresen with his snow-sled could have made it in one third the time; but the slender figure in its white fur robe never hesitated or faltered. The red dawn of Christmas Eve was breaking in the East as she reached the house of the Borgmastare of Norumbega, to find which she had had to ask her way.

The bells of the city were ringing joyously, and from the cathedral near by she heard the Christmas hymn of the Vikings as she delivered the little fur bundle to the delighted Runa. Briefly she recounted how she had overheard the men plotting to steal the child for revenge—how she had prevented it, and then declining the invitation to remain and see the Borgmastare of Norumbega, she hurried away.

### CHAPTER III.

It was the hour for the great Nativity play to begin. In the vast cathedral a stage had been erected between the chancel and the nave and here was a representation of the manger at Bethlehem, in a setting of tall dark evergreens, or Christ's trees. A thousand lights twinkled on the stage and in the nave of the church.

Standing near the stable the whitehaired priest, Father Rolf-Samund, gazed thoughtfully at the

crowds that had poured into the church, some kneeling, some standing, and some resting on the floor. The great miracle plays of the Nativity at Christmas and the Passion in Holy Week were his chief methods of impressing the truths of religion on the rude Northmen, in whose blood still lingered the legends of Odin and Fregga.

And now the solemn drama has begun. The fair-haired Mary, a white hood on her head, a blue mantle over her shoulders, has ridden across the stage on an ass, with Joseph by her side clothed in a dark brown robe, in his hand a stout stick having a crook on the end.

There is no room at the Inn, whose twinkling lights shining through low windows, are seen from one side of the stage, so they turn away and knock at the door of the lowly stable. The great door flies open, revealing the rough but warm interior, made sweet with the odor of hay and breath of kine. The door closes and presently opens again showing the young child in the manger, his blue eyes gazing at the brilliant crystal star set just beyond his manger crib. Those kneeling near utter a low exclamation. Never in the history of the miracle play in Norumbega had there been such a fair and beautiful Christ-Child.

To the accompanying words of explanation of the priest the play went on, and the great multitude

stood or knelt on the marble floor, its whole attention centered on the drama of the Nativity

And now a door in the left transept of the cathedral opened and there entered the shepherds with their crooks, one or two with a lamb under one arm, to offer their homage and adoration to the Divine Child. After them came the three wise men, Gaspar, Melchior and Balthazar, entering from the right transept, and bringing their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. They grouped themselves at the back of the stable and now the vast congregation arose and simultaneously they broke into two dividing lines, leaving a clear space between that formed a wide aisle.

Two by two each line advanced and bent the knee before the Child in the manger, then, returning, passed down the wide center aisle, formed by the two streams of advancing worshippers, and so out of the church into the frosty starlit night.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the old gray stone mill that was destined to stand for a thousand years or more on the rock-bound Norumbegan coast, a man and a woman were gazing out across the sunny sea. The narrow winding stairs in the mill led up to a room above, and here they sat and conversed, the woman's sweet voice speaking in accents hushed and low.

"In far-off Trondhjem," she said, "they are keeping Christmas Eve with mirth and feasting and song. The great wassail bowl is full to the brim, and they are drinking our health; and know not of the sorrow that has befallen us on these far-off shores."

The tall Viking shook back the long, fair hair from his brow. "It is a sad Christmas," he said, "but it will be doubly so if we stay here. There is no use in watching the shore and the shining waters. We have been here two days and are rested now and refreshed. Let us journey to Norumbega to my father's house and then to the cathedral to see the great miracle play."

"Last night," she said, "while you slept, I was happy, for I prevented an evil deed. I carried the little child all the way to Norumbega. It rested on my arm, and my heart was comforted. So would I spend the rest of my life, trying to make others happy by bringing the Christ-joy to their hearts."

The man laid his rough hand on her fair head as he arose to make ready for their departure, the woman also arose and followed him down the narrow, winding flight of stairs to the floor below. Presently, well wrapped in their furs, they were walking over the long stretch of frozen coast that led to the fair city with its crystal and silver towers and pinnacles,

that glistened in the rosy light of the morning sun.

\* \* \* \* \*

The air within the great cathedral was warm and fragrant with the odor of evergreen and fir trees and soft melting wax. Under the shade of two tall magnificent evergreens was the stable, surmounted by a brilliant crystal star. Hundreds had already passed before it to admire the fair, beautiful Christ-Child in Runa's tired but happy embrace. Now she has handed him to the brown-garbed Joseph who, advancing to the door of the stable, held him aloft in his strong arms, so all could see and admire, and be more deeply impressed by the reality of that first Christmas night so long ago.

The beautiful child with its aureole of golden hair that under the radiance of the crystal star looked like a divine halo, held out wide its fair, dainty little arms, and laughed for sheer delight at the sight of the dancing lights and the sound of the soft tinkling bells that were fastened to the necks of the cattle at the back of the stable.

The little Mary for very joy of the wondrous drama in which she and the child had been the central figures, drew near the brother, her white hood falling over her golden hair, and shading the modest purity of her young face.

The church now was almost empty when the great

door at the end of the nave opened, and two figures entered. The fair, pale face of the woman was lifted to the great central cross that, high up on the lofty rood screen, stood out dim and mysterious above the brilliant illumination of light below.

Thus they advanced up the nave; in the ears of the woman there sounded not the exultant strains of the *Adoremus*; but the sad wailing cry of the Mother of Sorrows as she stood at the foot of the cross, until—there was a flash of light from the star that for a moment blinded her eyes, a bending of her knee before the representation of the sacred scene at Bethlehem; and then a cry that went echoing up and up through the vaulted arches of the roof.

The sad, almost crouching figure of the woman, in its garment of white fur, became erect, radiant, beautiful; for this mother who had lost, had now found her only son.

With outstretched arms and incoherent words, she took the babe from the astonished and unresisting Joseph. That divine right of motherhood could not be gainsaid.

And now Father Rolf-Samund had come up, and others were crowding around, the while Tycha was pressing the golden head to her heart, and Eric, who, with a less subtle vision than his wife, had not recognized his child until its mother had claimed it,

was pouring forth the wonderful tale of how he had tried to save his child, and then had believed it lost. Of how, just after he had sent the child out over the snow-swept waters, the tide had begun to go down, the storm had abated, and they had been able to make two rafts, and all get to the shore, landing, however, much higher up on the coast, whence the sailors had made their way to the city, but he and his wife had stopped at the old stone mill, and had found there both food and shelter.

Then, with clasped hands, and her blue eyes bent on the laughing Christ-Child, Runa had to recount her own and her brother's share in his rescue.

But most wonderful of all was the tale of how Tycha had saved her own child from being carried off to the far northern shores by wicked men, and thinking only, with simple, unerring faith and duty, of taking the child to its parents (as she supposed), had carried it safely in her arms five miles down the frozen, rockbound coast,—even as the Holy Mother Mary carried her Divine Child safely into Egypt, out of the reach of Herod's cruel designs.

The wonderful news spread far and wide in Norumbega, and fair Norse maidens and brave Norse men crowded back in the cathedral, where all united in singing a magnificent *Te Deum*.

"It is the happiest Christmas of my life," said



Runa, "there will never be such another, Ragnor."

\* \* \* \* \*

Four centuries later, before the advent of Columbus on the shores of America, Norumbega had vanished. The wonderful Norse city with its high towers and pillars of silver and crystal lived only in later legend and song. But on the shores of New England there still stands the old stone mill which some traditions ascribe to the Norsemen of the Tenth century, and which formed such a safe harbor of refuge on that day when the Divine Child safely guided over the rough waves and wild surf the frail little raft that bore to the shelter of the old mill the Christ-Child of Norumbega.

## THE SIGN OF ORION.

"The three stars are the three Kings," said little Pedro. Old Santos crossed himself. "The three Kings, Gaspar, Melchior and Balthasar; and the four stars in the corners are the four blessed Evangelists who wrote about these same wise men."

"Who told you about it?" questioned little Pedro.

The old Mexican knocked the ashes from his pipe, and shook his head before he answered. His eyes had a far away look, as of one who sees beyond the present into ages long gone by.

"I think the blessed saints whispered it in my ear," he said. "It is a mysterious sign, that three. The three Kings—yes—and the ever blessed Trinity; and the three at Nazareth, Jesus, Mary and Joseph—and always the four stars in the corners to typify the holy Evangelists who tell us about them all."

A long green lizard, whose slender back sparkled like gold in the bright southern sun, here darted out from among the stones where the old man and his grandson had been sitting, and the child instantly gave chase, his bare brown legs flying over the stones and down the hill almost as fast as the lizard itself. Not quite, however, for presently he returned unsuccess-

ful—his face flushed and his brown eyes sparkling with the exercise. Stretching out on the warm brown earth at the old man's feet, he pulled his broad-brimmed hat over his eyes and gave a sigh of comfortable content.

"There is a story," he said, "a story about Orion, the hunter. Tell it to me, *Abuelo Santos*."

"Ah! my little *Nieto*," said the old man. "It is a long story, and one I have not told for many a day."

But the child persisted. "I have never heard this story," he said. "When we are out on the plains, *Abuelo*, and you think I am asleep, I see you look up at Orion shining in the blue dome of the heavens; and then you talk to him who lived and is gone—the Orion who came across the great mountains far away."

The old man sighed, and crossed himself again.

"Have it as you will," he said. "It is a long story, little one, but a good one."

"It was many years ago," he began, and the child who was sitting up now, clasping his knees with his slender brown hands, listened eagerly. "Many years," continued old Santos, "and I worked then for the *Senor Americano* who had come south for his health. In those days I had a double duty—in the day time I worked around the ranch for the *Senor* but at night I was out on the plains with three other

boys and the dogs, to protect the vast herds of cattle that belonged to the ranchero. We took turns, we four, in the watch; and always when my turn came there was Orion shining in the sky overhead. What secrets it held! What wonderful mystic significance of our faith—what strange weird tales of Orion the mighty hunter, he who was Prince of Tanegra, some said. It was my master, the Senor, who told me about that star; but it was only the heathen story that he knew. 'You seem interested in Orion, Santos,' he said. 'For my part I shun it. Virgil says it brings tempest and woe; and I like not even to see it at night by accident.' Who Virgil was I did not know; but not a Catholic, I was certain, or the blessed saints would have whispered to him, as they did to me, of the wondrous beauty of that star—of the thoughts it brings of the Holy Trinity, of the hidden life at Nazareth, and the three wise Kings. No wonder I cross myself when I see Orion in the heavens, my little one.

"It was nearing the time when the bright star would no longer be visible in the heavens, when one morning my mistress called me as I passed the broad gallery where she sat sewing.

" 'Santos,' she said, 'a friend from the North is coming to visit us, and will arrive by the evening train. Have one of the boys ready with a cart to

bring up her trunks, and meet me at the station five minutes before train time.'

" '*Si Si, Senora,*' I answered, touching my sombrero.

"Who could the Senorita be? Was she young or old? pretty or ugly? I welcomed the thought of an addition to the family, and for that I had not long to wait. It was then noon, and would be but six hours to train time. I was at the station when the engine rounded the hill and came thundering down the track. There was the usual stir and bustle, and then I made out a fair-haired, blue-eyed young senorita greeting my mistress. Yes, there was no doubt she was beautiful.

" 'Oh!' I heard her say, 'how lovely it is to get here, Margaret, and what a country! I have been enchanted all the way northward among these hills.'

" 'Just as enthusiastic as ever,' said my mistress, laughing. 'And what of the negro shanties, and tumble-down fences, the scraggy grass and poor Mexican adobes?'

" 'Oh! they add to the picturesqueness of everything,' said the senorita. 'With these mountains and sky for a setting everything is beautiful.'

" 'And how is every one at home, Stella?' said the senora. So the lovely young senorita was named Stella — a star! My interest in her was in-

creased tenfold. I advanced and touched my hat.

" 'Your bags, Senorita,' I said, taking them from her, whereupon she smiled at me—a radiant smile; for, indeed, this senorita was all brightness and laughter, yet the time came when I found that on a question of right or wrong she could be as firm as a rock.

"How bright the ranch became in those days. The Senorita Stella was everywhere. She rode with the master, each mounted on a stout little burro. She drove with my mistress in her comfortable surrey. She climbed the hills, and followed the trails over the mountains, and, indeed, she seemed never tired.

" 'This wonderful air is like champagne,' I heard her say.

"A month later, and one night on raising my eyes to the brilliant sky overhead, I saw that Orion had disappeared. It would be long before he appeared again, I thought. Then I rolled myself up in my blanket, for the nights were cold, and presently I was sound asleep.

"The red dawn was just appearing in the east when I opened my eyes. Was I dreaming or waking, and was it Jose or Alberto who stood by me, bidding me arise?

"I rubbed my eyes and looked again. Near me stood a tall, noble figure in the dress of a hunter.

His suit was stained by wind, rain and sun, to a tawny brown. Brown were the eyes that looked down on me, and the short pointed beard, while around his waist was a broad leather belt fastened by a silver buckle. When presently he turned his back to me I saw, with scarce any surprise, three silver stars on his belt, that shone brilliantly in the morning sun that now rose golden and radiant in the far-off east.

"As in a dream I heard his voice—a deep, mellow voice that seemed to have caught all the cadences of the wind when it floats across a summer's sky and rustles in the trees.

"He was asking me for the Senor Americano, and I sprang up.

" 'I am the Senor's man,' I said.

" 'So I supposed,' he answered. 'I have walked the thirty miles through these hills, from the city, and I thought I must be near the ranch when I saw these herds, and you Mexican boys asleep.'

"How clear and frank were the brown eyes looking at me. He appeared as one untouched by the dross and cares of earth.

"I led him across the wide, arable land and over the bridge that spanned the river, where the cattle were coming in droves for water, and so up the hill to the hacienda. It was early; but my master and

mistress were on the gallery as if in expectation of the new arrival. It was my master who arose slowly; for even then the *tisis*, from which he suffered, had begun to do its fatal work. He came forward, and the young hunter pulled off his cap as he ascended the few steps to the gallery.

“ ‘Orion!’ said my master, and ‘Orion,’ echoed my mistress, and the new comer laughed—a joyous laugh.

“ ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘here I am, some hundreds of miles across the Rockies, leaving my ranch and everything for—you know what!’

“The house door was flung open at that moment and forth came the young Senorita Stella. How lovely she looked; but her face was pale, and her eyes, usually so starry, seemed to widen, and then shrink under their lids, when they rested on the new comer who was evidently no stranger to her.

“What he felt was clear. There was no fear in his mien as he bent before her, and then advanced with outstretched hand.

“ ‘I did not think this corner of the world would ever see you,’ said the Senorita.

“ ‘To one who has hunted across the Rockies, distance is nothing,’ he answered, ‘and I—well I got tired of the stern grandeur of our mountains and I came South to see if the romantic Guadalupe is all that it is said to be.’



"The call for our breakfast here sound-ed and I joined Jose and Alberto in the kitchen that stood some distance from the house. Never had my curiosity and wonder been so stirred as by the advent of this stranger in his hunter's garb, which yet became him so well. Was he really a hunter, you ask? Not exactly, little one. I afterward learned that his costume was that of what my master called a 'Rough Rider'—the tawny suit, short trousers, high boots and wide hat—above all, the broad belt.

"They said he owned and lived on a vast ranch on the other side of the Rockies. That was what men said, little one; but, well, let me whisper it in your ear—I believed it not. It was Santos who knew better, and time would show!

"That night there was such a storm as even our tropical clime seldom saw. The thunder rolled, the lightning flashed, and the wind swept down from the mountains seeming as if it would tear all the ranch buildings from their foundations.

"I was up early after a nearly sleepless night, and found clear skies and dazzling sunshine. As I was carrying water up the hill I met my master and the Senor Orion.

" 'Upon my word,' I heard the master say, as I passed, 'one would think, Orion, that you were your

namesake come to earth, the bringer of tempest and disaster—just look at that tree!”

“He pointed to a tall cypress, one of the best trees on the ranch, that had been ripped right across the trunk by the lightning, and lay prone on the brow of the hill. Was it my fancy, or did the Senor Orion’s laugh seem to lack feeling, as of one who had intelligence but not soul?

“I passed out of earshot, and for a time forgot the incident. There followed many weeks when the master grew more feeble, when the senora was constantly with him; and the Senor Orion and the young Senorita Stella were thus thrown on each other’s society, whether she wished it or no—and something told me that she did not desire it, though well I knew she that loved him better than aught else on earth!

. . . . .  
“So there was a mystery, little one, some dark unfathomable deed in the past that made it impossible for the one who shone like a star on our ranch, to be happy. Came the day when the secret was revealed to me, and then I knew the strength of our holy Catholic faith in the heart of our laughing senorita.

“I had been sent across one of the hills on an errand for the master and on my way back I had to

follow the river. The hour was almost noon and the sun overhead was hot, so I threw myself down under a tree high up on the river's bank, to rest ere proceeding on my way. I had not been there five minutes when I heard the splash of oars, and leaning over the bank I saw, coming down the beautiful stream, a small rowboat in which were two figures, the Senor Orion and the sweet young Senorita Stella. He was rowing and she was bending over the side of the boat with one hand dipped in the clear waters. From many of the trees that bordered the river's bank hung beautiful long trailing vines that in some places dipped into the water, or floated on its surface. One of these got twisted around the senorita, and the vine being strong almost lifted her from her seat.

“ ‘Oh, I'm caught!’ she exclaimed.

“ ‘I wish you were,’ he said, as he quickly put up his oars and commenced unfastening the vine. He did not take up the oars again, and the boat began to drift with the stream. Presently it got caught in an eddy, and before they quite knew where they were, it had shot up into a tiny cove right under the bank where I was.

‘ ‘Well, as we are here, let us stay a while,’ he said. ‘It is a good place for a talk.’

“She put out her small hands with an appealing

gesture. 'No more talking, Orion,' she said. 'You have lingered here too long. You knew I did not want you to come; and only because we are both Margaret's guests, and because I cannot leave here—as I would, if I could—have I renewed an acquaintance that is full of sorrow and pain for us both.'

"And then the *senor* began to plead with her. He was a mighty lover, this Orion, and it was plain that the *senorita* worshipped him, and, by and by, as I held my breath and listened, I made out the whole story. They had loved each other once, seven years ago, but something came between them, and he married—a miserable marriage it was—and at last by every right human and divine (so he said) the *Senor Orion* had obtained a divorce from his wife and was free once more to marry again where he would.

"I knew little of such matters, my *Nieto*, and indeed all I now know I learned from the *Senorita Stella* in that hour when her lover moved heaven and earth to break her will; and when only God and the blessed *Madre* kept her true to her religion and the teaching of Holy Church.

" 'It would be a sin,' she said. 'You may think we would be happy, Orion; but we would not. Between us would always lie the shadow of an unblest union. We have come on evil days, and if Catholics

do not hold out for the sanctity of marriage, who will?’

“ ‘You are quixotic and romantic,’ he said.

“ ‘No,’ she answered, ‘it is not romance. It is a very simple matter of right and wrong; and the world at large has twisted and warped it into a hideous thing.’

“She took off her hat as she spoke, and dipping her little hand into the cooling water, carried some of it to her head—the sun glinted on her fair head, and I saw how white and drawn was her once bright face. ’

“ ‘Take me home, Orion,’ she said, and her tone was piteous. ‘You know I cannot leave here; but you can leave me. Be a man and go.’

“Without a word he took up the oars and brought the boat out in the middle of the stream, with a few vigorous strokes. The frail craft shot down the river rapidly, going with the tide, and presently I, too, was following the trend of the river’s bank, leaping rapidly from one rock to another, till I struck the trail that led to the ranch. It was near the dinner hour and I was young and strong, so I ran rapidly, unmindful of the hot sun overhead. Just as I was leaving the trail above the river, and about to climb the hill to the ranch, I heard a cry. I knew that voice—the senorita’s. In a second I was half-

rolling, half-scrambling down the river's bank. Once on the shore I flew like the wind, and rounding the point where the senor had a boat landing I was just in time to see the Senor Orion, dripping wet, as he came out of the water, bearing in his arms the unconscious form of our Senorita Stella—the boat, bottom up, was floating down the stream.

“ ‘Run, Santos!’ he said, when he saw me. ‘Run to the ranch for help.’

“I flew and met Jose. Between us we carried her up the hill. I thought I knew it all—excited and despairing, the senor had rowed recklessly, and the accident had followed.

“Yes, he left the next day, little one. He had not come off unhurt himself in that river accident, for his arm was in a sling, and that was why it was that he had called to me for help.

“And the young senorita? Many a day she kept her room, and when, a month later, she appeared once more, I was shocked. Nevermore was she like her old self; but her face had a spiritual loveliness that was not of this world—so I was scarce surprised when I learned, a short time later, that the blessed saints had called her to a life of religion.

“The night after she took her vows I was out on the plains, and there once more, brilliant and beautiful in the heavens, was Orion. The three stars on

his belt shone as of yore; but his back was toward me, and I saw not the laughing brown eyes, nor could he look down into her convent cell and see his star that he had loved and lost.

"Yes, little one, they said he came over the Rockies but—let me whisper it to you—Santos knew better. Else why did the mighty hunter Orion leave the starry heavens for a time, and return there when he had wrought his storm and stress on earth?"

"I like the three Kings better than Orion the hunter," said little Pedro.

"Ah! my little *Nieto*," said the old man, "the blessed saints have taught you; for so it is—in the heavens as on earth—heathen and Christian, belief and unbelief. In the starry sky the sign of Orion the hunter to some; and the three Kings and the holy three of Nazareth to others. On earth the hunter, who seeks only his own desire, and brings darkness and pain in his wake, and fighting this evil, the pure souls who take the holy three at Nazareth for their model."

## CATARINA.

The glistening white walls and broad galleries of the Sanitarium stood out clearly in the late afternoon sun. A sense of coolness and peace was lent to it by the dark green venetian blinds on the windows, and the broad green-and-white striped awnings that overarched the galleries.

Tall, leafy pecan-trees lifted their topmost branches above the cross that surmounted the cupola, and in the garden old-fashioned flowers bloomed in profusion. The wide grounds surrounding the Sanitarium were portioned off by the inevitable barbed-wire fence of the South. Beyond the flower gardens a gate through the fence led to an enclosure where on one side stood the kitchens and laundry, and on the other the little white chapel where the sisters and their nurses heard Mass every day.

Beyond this, through a second gate, the stony path led to the farm-yard stables and water-tower, whose windmill moved lazily in the light afternoon wind.

Westward a long range of hills appeared dark against the horizon, in contrast with the magnificent southern sunset that stretched from north to south,



making a golden splendor that lit up the opposite valley and hills. Nature in that charmed region was fair and beautiful; as if to bring hope to the hearts that came there with bodies sick unto death. It was nearly time for the Angelus bell, as back and forth in the garden walked a young girl with a basket and pair of scissors, cutting long stems of the roses that grew in such profusion. Her hands, strong and shapely, grasped the thorny stems deftly as the clip, clip of her scissors passed from stem to stem.

The German doctor who attended the Sanitarium, and who often watched her, said it was the way Catarina Olgin handled her patients; gentleness first, he thought, and then skill and strength.

A door at the side of the house opened, and the Mother Superior came out in the warm sunshine and advanced toward the rose garden. The young nurse heard her coming and straightened up.

"You want me, Reverend Mother?" she said.

"Not to call you away, Catarina, but only to speak to you. The train from the city gets in about 6:30, and Doctor Amend is bringing a very sick patient, a young man in nearly the last stages of consumption. I have had the south-west corner room prepared for him, and have detailed you to be his day nurse. Miss Fitzgerald will take the night nursing. It is a peculiar case," she continued;

"the young man has no near relations living. Dr. Amend says he has been a lawyer in a Northern city and very high in his profession; then he had an attack of pneumonia one winter two years ago, and has been going from bad to worse ever since."

"Poor soul!" said Catarina. "Is he a Catholic, mother?"

"No," answered the superior, "and that is the saddest part. Dr. Amend says he has absolutely no belief."

"The good God can find ways, mother, and it is not yet too late; the faith may come."

"Do all you can for his comfort, Catarina; and for the rest we must pray."

The mother returned to the house, while presently the young girl went toward the chapel, and disappearing within the door, gave her flowers to the sacristan, who was getting the chapel ready for the early Mass on the morrow, for it was April and the day before the glorious feast of Easter.

"Poor young man!" she thought, as she hurried back to the Sanitarium, "it is nearly time for him to get here. Ah!" and she paused, "there is the whistle of his train."

Passing upstairs, she glanced into the cool interior of the large bed-room prepared for the expectant guest. The white enameled bed stood crossways

between two of the windows, looking out on one side toward the distant range of hills on the other taking in the spire and cross of the little chapel. The sound of carriage wheels on the hard clay drive reached Catarina's ear, and she descended the wide oak staircase to the hall below. The mother was there before her, standing near the open door.

"You had best get the wheeled chair," she said. "I doubt if the young man can walk."

The nurse opened a closet in the hall and wheeled out the chair; together the two women passed out on the wide gallery just as the stage drove up.

The doctor was the first to alight. A man between forty and fifty, Dr. Amend had been visiting physician at the Sanitarium for many years. His patients knew him as a man of superior scientific and intellectual gifts. The broad, open forehead and firm mouth and chin, showed the man's power and strength of mind, while the blue eyes looking at you from behind gold rimmed spectacles spoke at once of the noble and spiritual nature that was indeed the foundation and bulwark of all the doctor's gifts. In figure he was not above medium height, of strong and sturdy build, and this strength was now being used to half lift, half carry a tall, emaciated figure, closely muffled in wraps, which he placed tenderly in the wheeled chair which had been brought

close to the steps that led up to the gallery.

"There you are," said the doctor cheerily. "I know you will take good care of him, Reverend Mother."

"You are welcome," said the mother in her sweet, low voice. "Perhaps you would like to go right to your room," she added.

"Yes," was the answer, in a weary tone of peculiar refinement. "I am very tired and would like to go to bed at once."

No one saw the start that Catarina Olgin gave as she heard the sound of his voice. For one moment she shrank back, then resolutely placed her hand on the bar of the chair, and commenced wheeling it into the house. Later, when her patient was in bed, and the night nurse had taken her place, Catarina sought the chapel, and knelt motionless before the red sanctuary light for nearly an hour. The radiance of the paschal moon made the Sanitarium nearly as bright as day, as she walked home about nine o'clock, and sought her room for much-needed repose and rest.

. . . . .  
"Wheel me down near the grotto, if you please, nurse," he said, "and read to me."

The nurse obeyed, and after seeing that he was comfortably settled, she opened her book and began

to read. The invalid lay back wearily with closed eyes, the while his white, almost bloodless hands hung listlessly over the arms of the chair. What a sweet voice she had, he thought, as the nurse read on; and how like her tones were to one who had passed out of his life ten years ago! He had noticed it the first evening he had come, and had given a sudden, startled glance at her face, only to find that at first sight it was an almost painful one to see. Smallpox had made ravages on Catarina Olgin's face. The lips had become thickened, the eyebrows were gone, and the skin was so deeply pitted and scarred that it was only when she smiled, and you saw white, even teeth, and the expression of her blue eyes, that her face was redeemed from ugliness.

After a few weeks the man forgot she was plain, and thought only of how good she was, and how comfortable she made him in his long, weary struggle with the dread disease that had laid him low. As he thus thought the nurse read on, until by and by she saw by his breathing that he was asleep; so she closed her book, and folding her hands, looked long and sadly at the sleeping man. It was a fine face on which her eyes rested. The temples and cheeks were wasted by illness; but it could not destroy the delicate chiseling of eyebrows and nose, the fine, sensitive mouth, and well-modeled chin; and the

eyes —well Catarina Olgin knew how beautiful the large brown eyes were which now were hid behind the motionless lids.

A fierce pain, that had been growing stronger and stronger all these weeks, was tugging at her heart. Ten years ago they had been engaged to be married. How old was she then?—twenty years; and the man before her had been twenty-five. The mother had called him young, but he was now thirty-five and she was thirty. How long those ten years seemed.!

She had met him on a steamer going to Europe, and he had joined them on the other side, and had travelled with them until they had finally become engaged. But in spite of going regularly with her to Mass in the glorious European cathedrals, he had openly professed no belief, and it was this which had finally parted them.

John Carter loved the beautiful Spanish girl with his whole soul, but pride made him unwilling to agree to the usual conditions of a marriage between a Catholic and a Protestant, and Catarina, profoundly religious even then, had finally decided she could not marry him. Had she done wrong? she thought, and remembering all the misery that usually results from such a union, her heart cried out no, a thousand times no!

She had remained two years in Europe after John

returned to America. Then came the loss of her father's fortune, and his death, and Catarina had returned to her old home in San Antonio. Her guardian, an elderly man, a devout Catholic, and an old friend of her father's—of American birth, with a Spanish name and descent—had proposed to her, and Catarina had consented. But she had been a wife only six weeks when a fall from his horse so injured the Senor Olgin that he had died in a few hours, and Catarina, left a widow, and without near relations, longing for some active work and occupation, had entered a training school for nurses, and after her two years' course and graduation had been appointed one of the nurses at the sisters' Sanitarium in the beautiful hill country, some thirty miles north of San Antonio. It was while she was taking care of a poor colored woman on the outskirts of the city that she had contracted the smallpox which had so ravaged her beauty, and now the man who had loved her so passionately did not know her; the change in her name had completed the disguise. It was better so, she thought; better so; but oh! if she could win his soul before he died.

"Dear Heart of Christ, help me!" was her inward prayer. "I cannot let him die without Thee."

A fit of coughing racked the figure that had been lying so motionless, and the brown eyes opened; in

their clear depths a look of dumb appeal. Catarina arose; there were times when she could scarcely trust herself, when she saw the look in the man's eyes, and contrasted his present state with the strong vigorous manhood she had once known.

"I will wheel you to the top of the hill," she said; "you like that sunset view."

"Yes," he answered; "you are very good to me, Senora Olgin."

As they started along the path up the hill the doctor's gig drove in the gate, and, handing the reins to his colored boy, he sprang out and came toward them.

"Give him to me, nurse," he said in his cheery voice. "I will be his 'Withers the Wan.' "

"I think I am the wan one, doctor," said the young man with a smile that irradiated his whole face, as he looked at the sturdy, vigorous frame before him.

Catarina left them and went into the house, and Dr. Amend wheeled his patient to the top of the hill behind the chapel, where they were in full sight of the distant blue mountains shining hazy and misty in the late afternoon sun.

The sick man raised himself to an erect position, and gazed long and silently at the exquisite scene. No sound broke the stillness save the tinkling of a



bell that seemed to come from a herd of cattle that a swarthy Mexican was driving home.

"Doctor," said John, turning his head toward where the elder man stood, "how long a time have I got to live?"

Dr. Amend turned his face toward the speaker, and was silent for a moment before he answered. The blue eyes behind the spectacles were beautiful with the man's strong tenderness as he replied:

"I think three months."

Seldom had the doctor had to answer a harder question, but he had long ago made it a rule to tell his patients the truth when there was no longer a ray of hope, and he knew that to parry the question in the present case would do no good.

"Thank you, doctor," was the quiet answer, as he held out his long, thin hand, which was received in a firm, gentle clasp. The doctor drew a bench up to the other's chair and sat down.

"The time may be longer or shorter," he said, "and I trust in either case will be without great suffering; and," he added, with a smile that was illuminating; "after the pain will come the joy."

The sick man shook his head. "I hope I shall die like a man," he said, "though my life, with all its hopes and aims, will be broken and incomplete."

"My dear friend," the doctor said, "your life will

not be incomplete. You have made a brave struggle to get well, and have failed; but it will not be a losing fight. You will have won the crown of a victorious manhood."

The large brown eyes, capable of expressing the man's inmost soul, looked his gratitude.

"How you can comfort us poor fellows, doctor," he said.

"I can only give you a lift," was the answer; "but the Great Physician alone can heal you in body and soul; and He will do so in the life beyond."

The strong faith and vitality of the elder man seemed to dominate the younger.

"The *Via Crucis* would be easier, doctor," he said, "if there were more men like you."

He lay back in his chair drinking in the warm sunshine and the sweet odor of the yucca plant that bloomed near them. A mocking-bird sang in the tree overhead, and he waited until the sound ceased ere he spoke again.

"Doctor," he said, "you know I am all alone; no relations, no near friends except those far away in the North, and whom I do not want now; but there is one I long to see before I die. I do not know where she is, but I can give you an address that may reach her. Catarina Zegrís is her name. I am sure that wherever she is she would come to me if you will write and try to find her."

The soft rustle of a skirt was heard as Catarina drew near. Even the doctor's usually keen eyes failed to see how pale she was, and there was a note almost of pathos in her sweet voice as she addressed her patient and said:

"I fear it is getting late for you to stay out."

"To be sure," said the doctor briskly; and as the nurse began to wheel the chair down the hill, he added: "I will visit my other patients and then come to your room, and you can give me the address you spoke of."

"I'll have it ready, doctor," the sick man answered.

. . . . .

Three months passed. The dying man can no longer go out, or leave his bed. The warm sunlight streams in his room; and nurses and sisters with tender, practised hands, do all they can to ease his suffering; but even human skill is powerless now to save him pain.

A month before this time the doctor had been obliged to tell his patient that the letter he had written to Catarina Zegrís had been returned to him from the dead-letter office unopened. Reluctantly he decided there was nothing further to be done.

It was one afternoon early in October when Catarina, coming into his room after a short absence, for

they rarely left him alone now, found him restless and his mind wandering.

"Catarina," he murmured; "Catarina, if I could only see you once again, and have you sing to me! You were noble and brave," he continued; "you loved me as I loved you, but above your love was one higher and holier that took you from me."

The young nurse bent over him, in her face unspeakable yearning and tenderness, as she laid a light, cool hand on his brow. He opened his eyes and smiled at her; then closed them once more, and presently his mind wandered again.

"Is it you, Catarina?" he said. "All these months of pain I have tried so hard to believe in your God; and almost, I think, I believe in Him now." Again his eyes opened. The cloud seemed to lift, and he was himself again.

Gently she raised him in bed and commenced giving him some spoonfuls of broth. Not once did she falter, nor did her hand tremble, though she yearned to take him in her arms and speak to him of their love, and of God.

At seven the night nurse came to relieve her; and finding herself free, Catarina set off for an abandoned quarry not far from the Sanitarium, where there was a shrine to our Blessed Lady. Tradition had it that the figure above the shrine had been carved

by one of the Franciscan fathers a hundred and fifty years ago. Be it as it may, it was well done, and the Catholics of that region, Americans, Mexicans, and Indian half-breeds, believed that no one who prayed devoutly at this mountain shrine would have their prayers left unanswered. Swiftly Catarina passed up the road and commenced climbing across the rocks of the quarry. A long, green lizard darted across her path, and a bird of brilliant scarlet plumage fluttered close to her head. The dry, delicious air revived her heart, heavy with its burden of love and pain.

Should she reveal herself to him? she thought. Then remembering the terrible change in her appearance, she decided no. It would be too great a shock to him in his present weakened state. The renunciation of ten years ago must be carried out to the very end.

She has reached the shrine now, and clasping her hands as she sank on her knees, she raised her eyes to the tender ones of the Mother of Sorrows.

"Dear Mother of Christ," she said, "think how thy sweet Son suffered. Ask Him to have compassion on my dearest one. Ask Him to ease his pain, and grant him the light of faith before he dies."

The sun went down, and the twilight deepened; but still the woman knelt and prayed.

. . . . .  
It was a week later.

"Doctor," John said one morning, "I have been thinking of many things since I have been here, and my mind is made up. If you will find a priest, I would like to be baptized."

The doctor's face glowed and from the heart of Catarina, standing near, there came a fervent "Thank God!" The doctor left the room, and in the hall he met the mother and told her.

"Praise God and the blessed saints!" she said joyfully. "I will send at once for Father Lewis."

"Yes," the doctor answered, "there is no time to lose. I doubt if he will live two days longer."

Then he went back to the cool, airy room, which he had thought many times seemed like a sanctuary, as he watched the gradual purification of the noble soul whose struggle to reach out after faith he had fully comprehended.

"It will all be arranged in half an hour," he said in his kind, sonorous voice. "Have you any special wishes, my dear friend?"

"Yes," the other answered, "I would like you and the mother to be my godparents, and I want my two nurses to be present."

"It shall all be done as you want, my dear son," was the answer.

After the ceremony of baptism, on the following morning the blessed sacraments of Holy Communion and Extreme Unction were administered, and John lay calm and happy. His beautiful brown eyes, in their hollow depths, were full of a strange spiritual light.

The mother came through the hall, and meeting Catarina, stopped her.

"Do you feel able to sit up to-night, my child?" she said. "I shall have to send the night nurse to a very sick woman to-night, and if you will take the watch from twelve o'clock, Sister Rosalie can take your place from six o'clock until midnight, during which time you can sleep."

"Yes, Reverend Mother," said the young nurse.

At twelve o'clock that night she was back in the sick-room, and Sister Rosalie had departed. The man seemed asleep, and after moving lightly around the room to see that all was in order, Catarina seated herself near the bed. Sister Rosalie had whispered to her that he had asked to have the light put out and the venetian blind drawn up, so the moon-beams would come into the room; it was therefore dark save for this silvery light.

For over an hour the patient slept; then his breathing began to grow rapid and labored. He had not coughed at all since she came on duty, Catarina

remembered; nor for some hours previous, as Sister Rosalie had whispered ere she left the room. Softly Catarina arose and approached the bed and laid her strong, light fingers on his pulse, which she found feeble and intermittent.

Quickly she reached for her thermometer, and presently removing it, went into the hall where a night lamp was burning. Yes, his temperature had fallen very low, and there was no time to lose. She pressed two electric bells, one to summon the mother, the other for the doctor, who lived in a cottage near the Sanitarium.

Even as she did so she heard him call "Catarina," and in an instant she was back by his bedside.

There had come over him one of those hallucinations common to his disease, only in this case he had divined what really existed.

"Catarina," said the voice, so weak it was now,—  
"Catarina, am I dreaming, or is it you?"

Tenderly she gathered him in her arms and rested his head on her shoulder; there was no need for further self-denial or concealment now; for the dying eyes could not see.

"Yes, my beloved," she answered, "it is I, Catarina. I have loved you and prayed for you all these years."

There was no question in his mind as to how she



came there; it was enough that his spiritual insight had reached out and divined it was she.

There was a sigh of utter content, then a gasping for breath.

"Sing . . . to . . . me, . . . Catarina," he said.

Although her heart was breaking, she began to sing, her voice softly rising and falling with the intensity of her own joy and pain:

"Jesus, the very thought of Thee  
With sweetness fills the breast,  
But sweeter far Thy face to see,  
And in Thy presence rest."

She sang to the end of the glorious hymn, and as the last sound died on the air the soul she had loved so purely and devotedly took flight.

## A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM.

### I.

"The time draws near the birth of Christ;  
The moon is hid; the night is still;  
The Christmas bells from hill to hill  
Answer each other in the mist."

—"In Memoriam."

Why weepest thou, meine Schwester?"

"I knew not I was weeping, Liebling; the tears must be in thine own eyes."

The fair, pale face of the elder sister looked down on the glorious, rosy face of the child. Yes, there were tears in the blue eyes of tall Marguerite; but she was smiling now, bravely and happily; for Roslein must not have her own happy eyes darkened by sorrow. The loving heart of Schwesterlein was not to be deceived, however.

"Thou art sad always now, Marguerite," said the child, "and Christmas is coming, when all should be happy and gay. Thou dost go often to the Kirche, and we hear no more the 'Frühlingslied,' which you used to love to sing."

Across the face of Marguerite there came a momentary pathetic look of pain.

"The 'Spring Song' is for the time of budding trees," she said, with another fleeting smile. "Now that there is frost in the air at night, and ice early in the morning, my song ought to be of Wassail and the Wonder-Child; is it not so, Liebling?"

Roslein's round little face looked doubtful and perplexed, then suddenly she laughed and clapped her hands.

"See," she said, "there is my pony. He has left the herd and is looking at me. He wants some sugar, Marguerite."

She was gone, first in the house for sugar, then flying down the hill to where "Prinz," her own special property, was standing near the fence that separated the corral from what in summer was the flower garden that stretched partly below and partly over the hill where stood the broad, low, whitewashed stone hacienda that was Roslein's home.

The wide gallery in front was sunny and pleasant this December morning; the warm sun by day and the slight frost at night were touching the leaves and trees with a scarlet and gold array. In the far North the earth puts on a white robe to greet the Christ-Child. Here in the South it would be a glorious mass of color that would greet the festivities of Christmas morning; for on Otto Franzen's broad

ranch lands all the customs of the Fatherland were kept up.

Roslein indulgently gave her pony all the sugar she dared, and then returned to the house in time to see Marguerite wheel her twin sister, Elsa, out on the gallery.

"Here, Roslein," she called, "come and get Elsa's book and pencils, Mutterchen wants me down at the dairy and I must hurry away."

Roslein's willing feet sped into the house, and she was back in a moment with doll, books and pencils, which she laid down on a table near her twin sister.

It was a lovely little face that smiled a "thank you" at her—the counterpart of Roslein's own, except that the rosy color was lacking. Nine-year-old Elsa looked fully three years older than her twin, and in attainments was certainly the superior, for, whereas Roslein only knew the rudiments of learning, Elsa could read and write almost as well as her grown-up sister, Marguerite. The two younger sisters were alike, however, in having unselfish and loving hearts, and both thought they would have died for fair, pale Marguerite. Watching her tall, graceful figure hurrying down the hill, a sunbonnet shielding her golden head from the sun, Roslein's thoughts returned to the little cloud on her horizon.

"Thinkest thou, Elsa," she said, "that our Marguerite is sad? What can the matter be?"

Elsa's serene blue eyes flashed a look of intelligence; she laid down the colored pencils with which she had begun to draw and let her eyes wander beyond Marguerite's fast-vanishing figure to the lovely valley and hills beyond the ranch.

"I know," she said. "I was awake one night and heard Mutterchen talking to our Vater about it. Marguerite has a lover. You remember Herman, Roslein, who was here in the spring and summer, and who was so big and strong and happy, and who carried me all around so that it did not hurt? It is he whom Marguerite loves."

Roslein clapped her hands.

"Oh, but that is splendid," she cried, "and we have no brother, and have always wanted one. But why went he away if he loves Marguerite, and why should she weep and sigh?"

"It is the Vater," answered her sister. "Seest thou not, Roslein, that it goes not well? Herman asked Vater for Marguerite, and was sent away. It is his Hochmuth, his pride, the Mutter said. At home, at the Schloss, our father was noble—Von Franzen was his name. I heard him tell Mutterlein that he had lost home and country, and part of his name; but that he had not lost his pride; and that

no daughter of his should marry one who worked as a farm hand, and when Mutter tried to plead with him, and said Herman was good and noble, and would make a son to be proud of, Vater swore, Roslein—swore a terrible oath; and then Mutter said no more."

"And where is Herman now?" asked Roslein.

Elsa knit her brows for a moment, and then nodded. "Yes, I remember now," she said, "I heard Marguerite tell Mutterchen he had gone to Milwaukee and had found work there, and was doing well; and all this she heard from Father Paul down at the Kirche, to whom Herman writes regularly, since he does not dare write to Marguerite or she to him.

"It is too bad," said Roslein, stamping her foot. "Who could play such games as Herman, Elsa, or who could carry you so well, and who broke Prinz of all his bad tricks and made him so gentle that there is not such another pony in Texas?—so they all say, the Mexican boys and ~~the~~ cattle men. Oh, there was no one like Herman, Elsa, no one else worthy of der lieben Schwester."

"No one, indeed," said Elsa, with conviction. "I am sure she will die, poor Marguerite, if he comes not back soon."

"And Christmas is coming," sighed Roslein,

"when every one should be happy and gay," and then she paused, and presently stamped her little foot again, her eager, impetuous little face alive with love and resolution.

"He must come, Elsa," she said, "at Christmas, and we must bring him, you and I. Let us send him a letter and tell him to come back to Marguerite."

"But, Roslein, the Vater," said Elsa. "He was so angry, it was terrible. I am sure there would be a dreadful scene, and Herman would have to go away again."

"He shan't go," said Roslein determinedly. "He shall stay and marry Marguerite."

"But we don't know his address," answered the practical Elsa.

"I will go to Father Paul and get it," said Roslein, dancing down the length of the gallery, and back again. "You can write the letter, Elsa, and I will take it to Herr Offer for the post-bag, and so it will be both of us who will help Marguerite—thou and I."

A delicate flush of excitement illuminated Elsa's pale face.

"Go now, liebes Roslein," she said—"now, while Mutterchen and Marguerite are down at the dairy, and we will write the letter after dinner when Vater sleeps or smokes his pipe."

Roslein was gone in a moment, down the stone steps set in the hill, that made a path to the ranch gate—across the railroad, and straight ahead over the bare brown road, flecked with cotton, till she reached the little low adobe house next to the old mission church by the river, where dwelt Father Paul.

\* \* \* \* \*

"And so, little one," said the white-haired old priest, when he had heard her tale, "you would send for him to come back—you and Elsa? I hardly know what to answer, child. You should not go against your father, and yet, perhaps, this is the good God's way to bring right out of wrong."

"Mein Vater," said the child, "Herman had to go away because he was poor, and in the Fatherland there was no Von before his name. The Christ-Child, too, was poor and of lowly birth. Suppose we always sent Him away at the blessed Christmas-tide because He, too, was not Von.

'Ah! my little one," said Father Paul, and his eyes were dim, "could we all but see it so, then would humility and meekness walk the earth undisturbed."

"So," said Roslein, "and thou wilt give me the address, mein Vater? We are going to pray, and say a novena, Elsa and I, and we are sure that the Herr Vater will not be angry, because the Christ-



Child never refuses us anything at Christmas; and so, mein Vater"—and Roslein looked almost ready to bring the small foot down again in a third imperious little stamp—"the Herr Vater shan't send Herman away again. This is not Germany, but America, and we are all free and equal here."

"You have a wise head and a loyal heart, little one," said the priest. "You and Elsa must pray, and I believe all will yet be well."

He handed her the coveted piece of paper, with the address, as he spoke, and the delighted child was soon speeding swiftly homeward.

Father Paul watched her out of sight.

"What a dear, whimsical, eager, loving little heart it is," he thought—"and her language! the stately German 'thou' and the crude English 'shan't' and her free American ideas! I believe in the end she and Elsa will conquer that stubborn Teutonic pride of caste in which Herr Franzen is encased."

The Angelus bell pealed from the little church tower near by. Pedro, the dark-eyed Mexican boy, whose duty it was to tend the bells, was proud of his skill as a bell-ringer. He glanced out of the bell loft where he stood, rope in hand, watching his Padre as he rang. Father Paul knelt and crossed himself, and remained kneeling until the last peal of the bell

had sounded and he had said the final Ave; then he arose and went into the house.

II.

"Long sleeps the summer in the seed;  
Run out your measured arcs and lead  
The closing cycle rich in good."

—"In Memoriam."

"Meine Frau," said Otto Franzen, "what ails die Kinderchen? Here I have been sitting this hour under the trees smoking, and they have been laughing and whispering up on the gallery, and yet so low I caught not a word."

"Ache Je!," said his wife, pausing in her knitting, "you forget, mein Otto, it wants but five days to Christmas; they have their secrets, die Kinderlein."

Up on the gallery the two fair heads were bent eagerly over the sheet of paper that lay spread out on Elsa's table. It must be in German, they had said; for although Herman spoke good English, perhaps he could not read it; so, to make sure, German it must be.

"Lieber Herr Meissner," wrote Elsa, and then she paused.

"What shall I say first?" she asked.

"'Because you are so far away, we are writing to you,' " said Roslein. "Have you got that down, Elsa?"

“ ‘Far away—weit weg—’ ” murmured Elsa, and then she looked up. “And now, Roslein?”

“ ‘We want you to come back and marry Margueirte,’ ” continued Roslein promptly. “She loves you, lieber Herman. Come at Christmas, and the dear Christ-Child will not let the Vater be angry.’ ”

With much talking and whispered words and laughter, the children got the letter written. It was put in its envelope, addressed, sealed and stamped, and half an hour later Roslein had seen it safely in Herr Offer’s post-bag, ready for the afternoon mail to San Antonio, whence it would fly northward to that wonderful city on the shores of one of America’s great lakes, known already the world over as almost a second Germany.

\* \* \* \* \*

As Roslein disappeared down the hill in the direction of the post office, the father and mother smiled, but, realizing it had something to do with Christmas, they forbore to call out or ask any questions.

Presently Herr Franzen knocked the ashes from his long pipe and arose; his wife looked up, although the click of her needles did not cease for an instant.

“Meine Hausfrau,” said Franzen, “I must go this afternoon to F——, as thou knowest, and see Hugel about that new machine, and the wire for the fence around the pasture below the river. I may be gone

two days or longer, but I will surely be home on Christmas Eve with presents for die Kinderchen."

Frau Frazen put up her knitting and arose.

"I will go and help you get ready," she said. These trips of her husband, lasting two or three days, were of frequent occurrence, usually made on horseback across the hills to points in the interior where the railroad had not yet penetrated.

The father's simple preparations were soon completed and he came out on the gallery ready to mount the horse a Mexican boy was holding. There was more than ordinary gentleness in his manner as he kissed Elsa good-bye. Passionately devoted to all his family, Elsa, by reason of her frailty, in contrast to his own and the others' strength, had always claimed his special tenderness.

"Lebt wohl, mein Engelein," he said. "What shall I bring you for Christmas?"

As if her own pet name of "little angel" had suggested something to the child, Elsa clapped her hands.

"I know, mein Vater," she answered, "a little Christ-Child with wings, to put on the top of our Christmas tree. The one we had last year got broken."

"Thou shalt have it, mein Liebling," said Franzen. "I would I could give thee everything thou couldst want, my child."

He patted Elsa's golden head, and mounting his horse rode down the hill. Thrice he turned to wave good-bye to the little group on the gallery; then with a last "Lebt wohl," he disappeared down the road.

"I like not those pale cheeks of my Marguerite," he thought. "Is she grieving for Herman? But, bah!" and he shrugged his shoulders, "she is young and will forget." For a few seconds he rode on, lost in deep thought; then the resolute jaw was set more firmly, and he put spurs to his horse. "Nein, nein!" he said aloud, in his vehemence. "The granddaughter of Graf von Franzen shall not marry one of lowly birth."

The day before Christmas Eve saw Frazen ready to return home. His business was satisfactorily completed, his pockets bulged with mysterious packages, while other purchases were to be brought to W—the next day by Hugel. Leaving F—at six in the morning, he expected to reach home by nine o'clock. The air, clear, dry, and with a touch of frost, made ideal Christmas weather for that Southern clime. If they did not have the snow, the skating and heavy frosts that had glorified his Christmases as a boy in the old Schloss, they would have great logs of wood blazing on an open hearth, the wassail bowl, and the Christmas tree at home and in the church, such as the Fatherland knew.

When about five miles from home Frazen turned his horse off the main road and struck westward across an abandoned quarry, a route he had often traversed before, as it shortened his journey about a mile.

Bismark, his horse, was a trained and seasoned animal, but not always proof against sudden shocks to his nerves, any more than was the man he carried so proudly. Was it that Frazen's hold on the reins had become lax, or did the horse swerve so suddenly that what happened was unavoidable?

Turning the corner of the quarry rather sharply, a wild animal—what it was Otto Franzen never knew—darted almost under the horse's feet. Bismarck reared and bolted—it was only a second of time, but taken unawares the man was thrown. Had he fallen on the right side, he would have alighted on the road that edged the quarry; as it was, he was launched over the abyss at his left and fell a distance of fifteen feet. The horse, wild with fright, essayed to gallop through the treacherous quarry. Leaving the main path, he tried to clear the yawning chasms cut here and there in the stone. Before going a hundred yards he made one last flying leap across a wider opening in the rock than what had gone before, but missed his footing, and in a few seconds was lying mangled and lifeless in the bottom of the shaft, which here had been cut to unusual depth.

## III.

“Ring out the grief that saps the mind,  
For those that here we see no more;  
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,  
Ring in redress to all mankind.

“Ring out false pride in place and blood,  
The civic slander and the spite;  
Ring in the love of truth and right,  
Ring in the common love of good.

“Ring in the valiant man and free  
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;  
Ring out the darkness of the land,  
Ring in the Christ that is to be.”

—“In Memoriam.”

In far-away Milwaukee, Herman of the fair head and strong, kind, brown eyes, entered the office of the large electric works where he was employed, three days before Christmas. The whirl of machinery was on every side, and involuntarily the man's thoughts turned to the wide, open spaces and pure mountain air of the country that held his liebe Marguerite. Ah! if he were only there!

“A letter for you, Meissner,” said one of the clerks, handing it to him, and the man started and smiled as he saw the postmark and childish address. It was the noon hour, so Herman could open his letter at once.

“Ach Gott!” he said, as he read the sweet appeal. Perhaps for once in a lifetime the strong man's eyes were full of tears. So they were loyal to him, the

children he had loved for their sister's sake and their own. How he blessed them—die Engelein! He stood a moment in thought on the wide street whence he had emerged, preparatory to seeking his noonday lunch. Yes, he would go, even though it meant, perhaps, braving the Herr's anger. If he left Milwaukee that night he could reach W— by Christmas Eve, and then it would go hard with him and Marguerite if the Christ-Child could not touch Herr Vater's proud heart.

He ate his lunch, and, returning to the factory, finished his day's work. At half-past five, when the factory bell rang, he sought his employer and asked for a week's leave. He had proved himself such a valuable workman that this was readily granted. At seven o'clock he left Milwaukee and, making good time, was able to catch the night train from Chicago to St. Louis. The next day found him speeding southward, hope and love high in his heart.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Oh, meine Schwester, how beautiful!"

Roslein stepped back and surveyed with sparkling eyes the last touches to a tall Christmas tree that nearly filled the space near the Blessed Mother's altar. They had asked and obtained permission from Father Paul to erect a tree inside the chancel rail, according to the German custom, and now,



having dressed it, were surveying their work. It was indeed a thing of beauty, from the silver wings of the wax Christ-Child, poised on the topmost branch to the bells and numerous glittering ornaments that sparkled on every bough. The whistle of the morning train sounded beyond the hill and attracted Roslein's attention.

"I must run home," she whispered, mindful even in her happy excitement of where she was. "Our tree is not yet dressed, Marguerite, and I promised Elsa to be back soon."

She genuflected reverently before the altar and was gone. Marguerite put the step-ladder back in the closet behind the sacristy, cleared up the debris, and with one final glance of approval at the tree emerged from the church and locked the door.

"Ah!" she said aloud, "if only my Herman were here, there would be nothing wanting to my joy save my father's consent to our union."

"Marguerite, liebliche Blume," said a well-remembered voice, and she was caught from behind and almost lifted off her feet, while past sorrow was forgotten in the present overpowering joy.

There followed broken and incoherent words on both sides, until presently the lovers were calmer.

"I met Roslein," said Meissner, "and she told me thou wert here, meine liebe braut, and so I came—"

and then he proceeded to tell Marguerite all about the letter. With what laughter and tears they read it together! Then, leaving the key of the church with old Maria, Father Paul's housekeeper, they wandered off, arm in arm, down the river's bank, oblivious to all else in the world but their two selves. Two hours later, they mounted the hill to the hacienda to find all in confusion, Frau Franzen looking for them and wringing her hands. Johann Hugel had ridden into W—an hour earlier with the machinery and other merchandise Otto Franzen had bought of him a few days earlier, and had learned that the master of the house was still absent.

Consternation reigned when he explained that Frazen had left him at six o'clock in the morning, the previous day, intending to ride straight home, a journey that took only three hours on a fast horse, and at the longest only five. It needed some one to take the helm, so Herman at once stepped in and assumed command, while Marguerite calmed the distracted mother and frightened children.

Willing neighbors speedily volunteered for a search, and these, with the farm hands and Herman, dispersed in different directions. All were provided with whistles, which the one who found the lost man was to use in calling the others to his aid.

That there had been some accident seemed almost certain.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Ach Gott," said Otto Frazen, "will help never come?" He lay on his side in the quarry with a broken leg. The injury, not in itself serious, was becoming intolerable because of hunger and weakness. For nearly thirty hours he had lain there, occasionally shouting; but the place was lonely and there was none to hear. Falling on his side, with his arm doubled under his head, his life had been saved and the head protected from injury; but the broken leg and bruised arm, combined with hunger and thirst, had made the long night hours seem an eternity.

Putting his hand in his coat pocket, he found Elsa's angel, uninjured by the fall. That was well, he thought—das Engelein would not be disappointed. And Roslein, his little red rose—she had asked for a chain of Indian beads, and that, too, was safe; so far it was well for the little ones. But Marguerite—his Jungfrau of the golden hair and deep blue eyes, whose bloom had once been like Roslein's own, what gift could he bring her that would recall the color to her cheeks, the light to her eyes—his Marguerite, who had suffered patiently without complaint!

Looking up at the vast dome of the heavens,

pierced by their thousand lights, through the long night hours, Otto Franzen fought and won the battle for Right over Might.

Yonder in the East a magnificent planet burned and flashed and sparkled like some enchanted jewel; even thus, nineteen hundred years ago, the star of Bethlehem had shone above the lowly stable where lay a little Child, Whose empire was the world—the Child Who had no Von before His name!

The strong man groaned in mental and bodily pain. Let him once get home and all should be well for his fair Marguerite; he would send for Herman, the man whom he knew to have true nobility of character and soul—he should be his son—and, who knew?—perhaps the staff of his old age.

The morning broke and the sun mounted higher and higher, bringing warmth to his chilled and stiffened limbs. He was a strong man, but thirty hours without food, and with torturing pain in his broken leg, were beginning to tell on him. Suddenly, far off, he heard the barking of a dog; exerting all his remaining strength, he tried to call; but the effort was too much. The feeble sound died in his throat, and, overcome by weakness, he fainted. \* \*

Was it the dog, his own collie, Bingen, licking his face, or the sound of a clear silver whistle that restored his consciousness? Opening his eyes, he saw first the

dog, and then the tall form and brown eyes of Meissner, the man he had sent away, thus miraculously sent to rescue him! He was too weak to think, but help had come; and then, remembering how he had last seen and spoken to his rescuer, he tried to frame some words of thanks that would express the altered temper of his own mind.

Yes! Herman understood—the face of the man, so tender and strong, was bent over him in infinite compassion. “It is well, mein Herr,” he said, “we are friends forever now, nicht wahr?”

Other friends were thronging around now, and quickly they improvised a litter and bore the injured man home.

“It is fortunate, Frau Franzen,” said the doctor, a few hours later, “that your husband is so strong. There is no fever and the bone has now been nicely set. By tomorrow he will feel like another man, and in a few months he will be able to walk as well as ever.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“It is the happiest Christmas Day we have ever had, or ever will have, for ever and ever,” said Roslein.

The face of des Engeleins was illuminated. “It was the little Christ-Child,” she said. “He is in the world forever and ever, Roslein.”

## THE VOW OF TIR-NA-N'OGE.

## I.

"Will they ever come to me again,  
 The long, long dances,  
 On through the dark till the dim stars wane?  
 Shall I feel the dew on my throat, and the stream  
 Of wind in my hair? Shall our  
 White feet gleam in the dim expanses?"  
 Oh, feet of a fawn to the greenwood fled!

O wildly laboring, fiercely fleet,  
 Onward yet by river and glen.

(Is it joy or terror, ye storm swift feet?)  
 To the dear lone lands untroubled of men.

What else is wisdom? What of man's endeavor,  
 Or God's high grace, so lovely and so great? \* \* \*  
 To stand from fear set free, to breathe and wait.  
 To hold a hand uplifted over Hate.  
 And shall not Loveliness be love forever?"

—Euripides.

"I am Denys Cairbre," he said, "Lord of Tir-na-N'oge\* and premier Baron of Ireland."

She flashed him a look from her splendored eyes, then dropped them on her sandaled feet, as she swept him a courtesy with her little red skirts.

"I am Moira of Glenamoy, Princess of Shee,† and first lady in Ireland," she said.

The boy of eleven looked down, and the girl of

\* Land of everlasting youth.

† Fairyland..

eight looked up. The face of the Lord of Tir-na-N'oge was set and immobile; but he could not keep the laughter out of his eyes, seeing which, the proud little heart of the Princess of Shee was cut to the quick.

"I hate you," she said, "you are laughing at me."

At that the merriment in his eyes escaped the restraint he had heroically put upon it and ran riot over his face, but before he could speak, she had turned and fled.

He paused a moment, watching the white feet skimming over the thick damp grass, the black hair and red skirts blown out by the wind from the sea, then he gave chase. He was the elder, and could run like a deer; but pain gave wings to her feet and she had the advantage of a few moment's start. Twice she eluded him, now darting through thickets of birch and pine trees, and again coming out on the open, until, finally, her course led straight toward the cliffs that towered far above the ocean below. The boy held his breath. "Moirá," he called. "Moirá," but the wind carried his voice the other way, and unmindful of the call the girl sped on.

Should he stop? No, their sandaled feet on the soft grass made no sound, so she would not know it if he was no longer in pursuit. Better redouble his efforts, and check that headlong descent of hers

before she reached the cliffs. But ere he could catch her, the Princess fell from her high estate. Her foot slipped on a rolling stone, bringing her to the ground, and although she was up again in an instant, the boy had reached her side and was making chivalrous attempts to assist her—attentions which she indignantly repulsed.

"I'm sorry, Moira," he said. "Won't you forgive and forget?"

This unexpected apology somewhat mollified her. The grey-blue eyes were very near tears, and the dainty mouth and proud little chin quivered; but not for the world would the first lady in Ireland have cried before a boy, and fortunately a happy diversion was near.

From far down the cliffs there came the strains of a violin, played with marvellous skill. The weird and beautiful music floated up to them, mingling with the sough of the wind and the thunder of the surf; in a second, the girl was all life and motion.

"Listen, Denys," she said. "It is Dermot with his violin, and it is the fairies' own tune. Come, let us dance."

The boy, nothing loath, ran with her to a broad plateau a hundred yards back of the cliffs, and in another moment their dance began. Back and forth they tripped—now hand in hand, now exe-



cuting their steps alone, with ever and anon a courtesy from the girl and an obeisance from the boy, until presently the music, which had been stately and rhythmical, became fast and furious, and they passed into a genuine Irish jig, dancing with joyous, childlike abandon, keeping perfect time, and oblivious to all else in the world save the enjoyment of the moment.

Far off on the western horizon there was a faint, pearly glow where half an hour ago the sun had sunk to rest below the Atlantic, leaving a splendor of red and gold in its wake. Overhead, a few pale stars had begun to glimmer among the wind clouds which were chasing each other across the heavens. The salt wind, that every moment blew more fresh from the sea, caused the girl's already damp skirts to cling more closely to her knees, and curled the boy's fair hair into a riotous tangle; but they heeded neither the wind nor the coming night. For them there was only the blended music of sea and violin as long as their intoxicating sweetness would last. \* \*

From her castle window the Lady of Tir-na-N'oge looked out on the scene below. In the fast-deepening twilight she watched the graceful dancing of the children, until finally the music ceased, and she espied the youthful violinist making his way up the cliff toward her son and his young companion. For

a few seconds they stood there together, their light laughter floating up to her through the open casement; then the musician came toward the castle, while the dancers, apparently knowing neither fatigue nor the desire for relaxation, set off at a rapid run along the coast, their course taking them southward to where a narrow fiord divided the estate of Tir-na-N'oge from that of Moira's father, the Lord of Glenamoy.

\* \* \* \* \*

"You will never forget, Denys?"

The boy threw back his fair head.

"Never, mother, never. The ancient motto of our house will be mine forever."

"Tell it to me," she said.

"We are Lords of Tir-na-N'oge" he answered, "and Tir-na-N'oge means land of everlasting youth, but long ago, when Coirlean Cairbre, first Christian warrior of our house, was converted by St. Patrick, he vowed him a vow that henceforth Tir-na-N'oge should have a second meaning."

"And that meaning is—what?" she asked fondly and proudly.

"The eternal youth of faith, honor and love," he said. "Other things grow old; other things change and decay; but in the house of everlasting youth,

faith, honor and love are eternally young and immortal."

There was a ring of tender enthusiasm in the boyish voice. Dear to him above all legends of his country was this ancient motto of Tir-na-N'oge.

The soft radiance of silver lamps shone down on the mother and her son, bringing out the noble outline of his head and profile, and lighting up the sweetness of her eyes and fair, open brow. There was strength, too, in the lines of her mouth and chin. "As our eyes are, God made us," says an ancient writer, "but our mouth shows us as we make ourselves."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Dermot is playing again," he said.

Far down the long hall of the castle came a wild strain of melancholy music. Now full of sweetness and passion, it rose presently into a discordant wail of despair and regret—only to pass triumphantly into the exulting strain of a conqueror. Higher and higher rose the music till it seemed to mingle with the far-off moaning of the sea and sighing of the wind. The delicate hands of the musician guided the bow over the strings as, with bent head and parted lips, he drew forth one harmony after another. Sitting close to the open casement, where he could see the white surf below and the brilliant arc of the

heavens above, he played on. In his unfathomable eyes there lurked unknown forces for weal or woe.

## II.

"The long, long dances  
On through the dark till the dim stars wane.  
O wildly laboring, fiercely fleet,  
Onward yet by river and glen \* \* \*  
Is it joy or terror ye storm swift feet?"

In the great hall of Castle Tir-na-N'oge there was dancing and mirth and song; for the young Lord was of age, and far and wide friends and kinsfolk had come to do him honor.

Up the middle and down again he danced, his tall, graceful figure bending to the rhythm of the music, the light in his eyes deepening, as ever and anon he turned to his partner, the Princess of Shee.

A veritable princess from fairyland she seemed that night in her dress of glistening silver. Her grey-blue eyes were as stars, and her dusky hair like unto the gloaming that gathers around the fairies' glen. Meeting him in the dance, she smiled, her white teeth shining as pearls through the scarlet of her lips, that matched the color of her slippers and girdle. Very beautiful to all eyes that night was this Princess of Shee. So thought Denys Cairbre, as he bent before her; and presently, in a pause of the dance, he spoke.

"Let us go out, Moira," he said.

Quickly they slipped from the great hall, and in another moment were out on the terrace overlooking the sea. The moon was nearly at the full, and far out a dazzling line of light cut a path through the surging waves whose white foam, lifted and tossed about and broken by the wind, glistened like silver spray. Overhead, white clouds chased each other across the moon, forming a delicate film like a fairy's veil. The green grass under foot, the tall firs and beech trees, and the grey walls of the ancient castle, were all bathed in the radiance from overhead. Surely it was the fairies' own world that night!

Eternal youth was in their hearts as they sped across the soft grass and down some old stone steps to a wide expanse of heather below—for had not words been spoken that day which bound them to each other forever and ever? Now they are flitting across the moonlit expanse to a grove of beech trees beyond, and presently, laughing and breathless, they find themselves at their goal—the well of Tir-na-N'oge.

Hand in hand, they kneel on the moss-covered stones by the well, around which curls the delicate clover, whose fragrance makes the hour one of intoxicating sweetness. Her beautiful eyes sought his as he handed her the cup of sparkling water.

"You first, Denys," she said. "Drink deeply

three times, and make your wish, and then I will make mine; the 'good people' are waiting and listening."

He held the shining cup aloft for a second, then carried it to his lips, and took three deep draughts.

"I wish that your heart shall be mine forever and ever," he said.

She smiled with divinest indulgence, then took the cup from his hand, as he filled it and gave it to her.

"You should wish that which it is not in our power to control," she said. "The fairies like to grant the seemingly impossible. My wish for you, Denys, is one which alone I cannot command: May God and the fairies watch over you forever and ever, and keep you safe from lasting harm."

The sweet well-water was drunk, and still they lingered to talk over past and future.

"Do you remember?" he said, "And have you forgotten?" she said. "Here we danced the fairies' dance, and there you chased me by dark fir wood and across starlit brae—and over beyond that great expanse of brushwood and bog you carried me across the fiord to Glenamoy, when a storm had swept the bridge away."

"All my life past reaches out to all my plans in the future," he said. "Faith, honor and love. To

ourselves, to our tenants, to the uplifting of our country, I consecrate this hour and day!"

Far out across the purple heather a voice was calling, "Denys, Denys."

And he answered back: "You want me, Dermot? I am here."

Out in the moonlight they stepped, and now they could see the tall, dark figure hastening toward them through the stillness that lay on land and sea.

In another moment the trio had met and Dermot Cairbre was looking at them with the shadows in his unfathomable eyes.

"I am sorry to be the bearer of ill news, Denys," he said, "and on your birthday night, but a messenger is here, who has ridden far and fast, to say that Shane of Shaughnessy lies at the point of death, and asks for you. He tripped on his gun this morning, and the charge entered his side; that is why we missed him here to-night."

The face of the young Lord of Tir-na-N'oge had blanched. Shane, the dearest friend of his life, the companion of his boyhood! Yes, even on his birthday night he must go.

"I leave it to you to explain to our guests, Dermot," he said. "Take Moira back to the castle, and I will go at once to the stable and saddle Brian-Boru."

So it came about that every one was on the terrace

to see him start when, ten minutes later, he came down from his room dressed for the night ride.

"I go by the coast," he said. "The ride is five miles shorter, and time is everything now."

But with one voice they exclaimed, "The tides, remember the tides."

The Lord of Tir-na-N'oge heard, but did not hesitate.

"There is time," he said. "It wants two hours yet before the shore becomes impassible, and my horse is fresh. Farewell."

There were murmurs among the timid ones as he rode forth; but the Princess of Shee spoke not. Had she not wished at the fairy well for just what he needed now?

Far down the coast they watched the galloping of his splendid horse, saw him rise in the saddle with each onward step, till in the soft gloaming he was lost to view. \* \* \* \* \*

There was dew on his throat and the wind in his hair, as he rode through darkest night, for now the moon had set beyond the sea; but he knew every step of the way, and did not slacken his horse's speed for an instant.

Was it an accident, or was it some unknown force that, even as his hand lay slack on the bridle, Brian-Boru stumbled and fell? He was thrown over the



horse's head, and striking his own head was conscious of terrible pain. What had happened and why? There was a confused murmur of voices, the sound of angry oaths; then, clear and distinct, these words were impressed on his brain.:

"Devil take you, Matthew, that blow was too hard. You've killed him."

"So much the better, Captain. Yonder Lord at the castle—he of the dark eye and the fiddle—will double our pay."

Prostrate—motionless—Denys Cairbre lay on the wet sands as one dead; but his brain was still unclouded, seeking in vain to grapple with the meaning of it all.

"Dermot—Dermot! Why this treachery?—and these men—who are they?" Ah, yes! He remembers now. "Foreign smugglers have been seen on the coast—my own men would never—do it." He stirred, and the man watching him uttered an oath.

"Your corpse is moving, Captian," he said. "Here, I will finish him; that first blow was not enough."

The heel of his foot came down on the fair noble head, and consciousness departed. Livid and death-like, Denys Cairbre was at their mercy.

Quickly they placed him in a small boat, and shoved it out from the shore. His injured horse was left to be drowned at high tide, and later washed

up on the sands, proof positive that his master had shared the same fate.

\* \* \* \* \*

Alone on the wide, boundless sea the little boat was tossed hither and thither. Far out over the waters it drifted—on and on through the night, toward that which lay beyond.

### III.

"The dear lone lands untroubled of men."

Brother Timothy walked on the shore of a little island in the sea, that was set like an oasis far out on the Atlantic. He was reading his breviary and it was yet early. Eastward, the sun was just rising above the horizon, and a fresh breeze was springing up over the clear waters that broke on the hard, pebbly beach at his feet. Behind him stood the monastery and outbuildings, and beyond that the fields where even at this early hour the brothers had commenced to till the soil. Sea-gulls flew over the island and perched on the rocks, and farther inland the birds were singing. Everywhere was an atmosphere of peace.

The bell from the church tower rang out the hour for the Angelus. The brother closed his book and was just about to begin the ascent of some long steps cut in the rock, that led up to the monastery,

when far off, over the dancing water he espied a small boat. The tide was setting toward the island, bringing the boat rapidly nearer and nearer the shore, but the brother held his breath. If it headed for the beach, all was well; but farther north were steep rocks where it would be dashed to pieces. Apparently, however, the boat was empty; so thought the young monk, when suddenly over the side of the frail craft he espied a man's hand and arm, hanging limp and motionless. In another moment he was pushing a small boat that lay high up on the shelving beach, toward the water, and springing in commenced rowing out toward the strange craft, his strong young arms diminishing the distance at every sweep of the oars. Just as he was almost within reach of it, the strange boat was caught in an eddy and, whirling around, shot northward toward the rocks, but with a dexterous turn of his oar the brother followed; reaching the stranger again, he dropped his oars and leaning far over the stern of his boat succeeded in catching hold of an iron ring set in the bow of the strange boat. Holding it tight with one hand, with the other he reached for a rope at his feet, and presently, with a sigh of relief, the two boats were made fast together. The young monk bent to his oars again, making for the island in the sea with all possible haste; for in the bottom of the frail craft—so

frail that it was a miracle how it had come so far out on the vast Atlantic in safety—was the figure of a man, apparently dead, the face and clothing stained with blood. The brother ran his boat on the beach and then stood up, his brown soutane blown out by the wind, and signaled to the workers in the field to come to his assistance. Ten minutes later Denys Cairbre was lying in the infirmary, while the aged abbot, who was skilled in medicine and surgery, bent over him.

"He is not dead," he said, "only badly injured on the head; but I think we can save him."

With rapid, practiced hands the monks worked over the unconscious man. The injured head was bathed and bound, and they ceased not their ministrations until all that their skill could suggest had been done. Then they left him alone with the infirmarian, with orders from the abbot to call him when consciousness returned.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Think once more, my son. Your name, what is it? Your home, where was it? and your past life, what of that?"

It was a month later. Fully restored to health, Denys Cairbre stood on the rocks overlooking the western sea, the kindly face of the abbot gazing into his. Around them was the splendor of an ineffable

sunset. It set a path of glory in the sea—it bathed the island in a rosy light, and lent a russet glow to the abbot's brown soutane. The evening breeze lifted the thick, wavy hair from the younger man's brow as he stood motionless, gazing seaward, aware that he had a past and trying in vain to recall it, but finding memory a blank. Beyond the present and this island in the sea, he could remember nothing.

The abbot, skilled in the delineation of character, did not press his subject, but studied his guest attentively. Whoever he was, here was no ordinary man. The noble outline of the head, the beautiful profile and firm chin, the sensitive, refined mouth and deep blue eyes, with their markedly defined eyebrows—all spoke of intellect and power. It was a face to attract and inspire trust.

Old cases of a like nature, that he had heard of when he lived in the world, came back to the abbot. Memory would return suddenly some day—until then, let the stranger bide with them.

Denys Cairbre listened as the aged priest, to whom he felt insensibly drawn, outlined his plan. Yes, he would stay. If he left there, where could he go? The present only was his.

\* \* \* \* \*

And so he abode in the island set in the sea for five years, and no man called him an enemy; for

there was that in him which reached to the heart of men. And then the day came when the aged abbot, to whom he had become as a son, sickened and died; and anguish of heart, and a rain of bitter tears, the first shed in years, broke the iron bonds that held his memory in thrall.

It was down by the sea—once more with a sunset glory in his eyes, but alone and desolate, Denys Cairbre stood, and suddenly, like a lightning flash across his brain, came words that had been seared there as by a red-hot iron.

*"Devil take you, Matthew, that blow was too hard. You've killed him."*

*"So much the better, Captain, yonder Lord at the castle—he of the dark eye and the fiddle—will double our pay."*

Like the lifting of a fog at sea his brain cleared; and all his past life lay spread before him. He was Denys Cairbre, Lord of Tír-na-N'oge, Baron of Ireland—and for five years all he loved had believed him dead! And then—beyond all other thoughts—came surging in through heart and brain a mighty flood of vengeance and hate; the false cousin who sat in his ancient house as its head should be made to suffer. He would lay bare his treachery to the world. The hearts of his countrymen, scorning a traitor worse than death, would be with him.

## IV.

"What else is wisdom? What of man's endeavor,  
Or God's high grace, so lovely and so great?  
To stand from fear set free, to breathe and wait,  
To hold a hand uplifted over Hate."

And so, once more, in the boat the brothers had given him, he drew near the beloved land of his youth. Far off he espied in the gloaming the grey castle walls, and he listened to the thunder of the surf as it beat on the cliffs, than which no music was ever sweeter to his ear.

With unforgotten knowledge and long-practiced skill he ran his craft into a narrow inlet on the shore, and commenced the ascent of the cliffs, where of old Dermot Cairbre had sat on that night when the young Lord of Tír-na-N'oge danced the fairies' dance with the Princess of Shee. Now, at the top of the steep, rocky steps, for a moment he paused, sheltered from view by a high boulder.

With joy and agony in his heart—the sweetness of reunion and the bitterness of treachery—his feet were stayed, and he leaned against the rock, for all in a moment his strength had become as weakness.

The sun had only just set, but over in the East a magnificent planet burned with a pure, steady flame, while all the air was full of the clear light of the early gloaming when everything can be seen as in the day.

And so Denys Cairbre, lifting his head, had his

heart stirred with divinest love and passion, for there on the white cliffs above stood the slender figure of his lost love; and ere he could spring forward and call her name, she began to sing, and once more invisible hands seemed holding him back and bidding him wait.

Her voice, sweet and low, commenced a song of love and regret, the lament of an Irish maiden in ancient times for her warrior lover.

O life and death! O joy and pain! While those past five years had been oblivion to him, what had they been to her? His head, which had been sunk on his breast as she began to sing, was lifted as the last note died on the air.

Shall he not go now—tell her that weariness and regret are of the past—that before them lies reunion and eternal love?

The great door of the castle swung back and closed again, and forth came a little figure all in white, a child with golden hair that, lifted by the wind, encircled his head like an aureole—a child not quite three years old. With outstretched arms and rapid, flying feet he came skimming over the ground, and the heart of Tir-na-N'oge turned to stone.

"Mother," he called, "mother," and the little voice was one of piercing sweetness. The slender figure by the cliff turned, and bent down mechanically to



the child, then, hand in hand, they ascended to the castle, and the great door opened again to receive them, and was closed.

With wide, unseeing eyes, Denys Cairbre stood—alone in the vast immensity of land and sea.

“Her heart is mine,” he said, “forever and ever; but the child—the child is his!”

The wish of the fairy well had come true—invisible hands had preserved him in all peril, invisible forces had kept her heart for him; but it was Dermot—Dermot, who had crossed their path in that magic hour by the well—Dermot, to whom he had resigned her when he rode forth at the call of duty and friendship! They had drunk of the waters of forgetfulness, and, lo! dark forces had warped their path of light.

“Love is lost to me,” he said; “but there is vengeance. I am rightful Lord of Tir-na-N’oge and its birthright is mine. What my mother gave me no one can take.”

Was it a dream, or was there a soft rustle of the evening breeze in his ear? Around him, gaunt and silent, towered naked rocks and scanty shrubs. There were no trees to sing a song of joy when they caught the magic of the wind among branch and leaf. Perchance, then, that gentle sound was the spirit of his mother—that mother who had died two years before his coming of age.

*His mother! His mother!* The great tide of bitterness and hate in his heart was met by a backward ebb—a mighty flood of memory and of love.

*"You will never forget, Denys?"*

*"Never, mother, never! The ancient motto of our house will be mine forever."*

On his knees Denys Cairbre was striking his breast, while the dark forces of revenge and hate were expelled forever.

"Faith, honor and love," he said, "these three never grow old. Faith to believe, honor to resist, love—even unto death." Then with no backward glance at the home of his fathers he arose, and passing down the long stone steps to the inlet below, in another moment he was in the boat, and sailing far out over the dark waters towards the north.

## V.

"And shall not Loveliness be love forever?"

"De Profundis Clamavi ad te Domine."

From his cell in the monastery, where for two years since his return he had lived as an honored guest, the Lord of Tir-na-N'oge was awakened one night by the chanting of the monks, and recognizing the ancient psalm, he arose. Who of their number had died during the night?

Down the long corridor that led to the chapel sped

Tir-na-N'oge, and meeting a lay-brother, stopped to ask for whom they were singing the sacred chant.

"A poor soul who was wrecked on the rocks in a small open boat at midnight," answered the young monk. The other thanked him and passed on.

Now he was at the great oak door, which yielded to the pressure of his hand on its heavy beams, and in another moment he stood within the chapel, his face turned toward the east. Myriads of candles gleamed on the high altar where stood the celebrant of the Mass for the dead. In their stalls, all the monks, in hood and cowl, were assembled, their faces turned to the bier at the foot of the chancel steps, where tall tapers burned with a steady flame. Whoever the stranger, Christian burial was to be his.

As in a dream Cairbre of Tir-na-N'oge passed up the wide aisle, between the rows of kneeling monks, until he was behind the bier, then, bending his knee, he arose, and taking a step forward, looked down at the dead face of his cousin, Dermot Cairbre.

The hand that had directed the blow at his head was crossed with the other on his breast; the unfathomable eyes were closed; the false heart was stilled forever. Rigid, immobile, motionless, he lay—on his dark, beautiful face the last irrevocable stamp of kingly death.

Through the long, slow chanting of the Mass

Denys Cairbre knelt by the bier, prostrate on the ground in prayer.

Vengeance had been meted out by One higher than he.

"*Misere mei, Deus,*" sang the choir. "*Secundum magnam misericordiam tuam.*"

With this sacred chant they buried him at break of day.

\* \* \* \* \*

A heavy fog was over the sea, but he knew every inch of the coast and with unerring instinct guided his boat toward the inlet below Castle Tir-na-N'oge. As in a dream, he stepped out on the smooth, shelving beach, and then, lo! a miracle—the heavy fog lifted, a radiant light shone far over land and sea, and there, coming down the steps toward him, immortal love in her beautiful eyes, and the sound as of many waters in the music of her voice, was the lost love of his youth. With outstretched arms she ran to him.

"Denys, Denys," she said, "I dreamed it—that you would come!"

Once more the grey sea vapor encircled them, and they were alone in the vast immensity of space. In her face was divinest love and reparation. In his, strength of a great purpose that had triumphed over a great wrong.

“Faith, honor and love,” he said. “In the land of everlasting youth these three are ever immortal. Faith to believe—honor to resist—love—even unto death!”

## THE LOVE-GIFT.

## I

The warm December sun shone full on the long, low white hacienda that stood on a broad slope of land half way up the hill. There were still some late flowers out in the garden, enclosed in its barbed wire fence, where Louisita was dancing and singing.

The house door stood open and the sound of her voice came floating on the air, clear and sweet, as she sang:

“A la rorro, nino,  
A la rorro, ro  
Duermete, bien mio,  
Duermete, mi amor.”

Old Carolina, the fat negress in the kitchen, heard her, and nodded her head. To-morrow would be the sixteenth of December, when the nine days' "poseda" would begin. Evidently Louisita's thoughts had leaped ahead of time and she was anticipating. Presently the song ceased and the child started toward the house. When near a long, low window that opened into the "sala," she espied a brilliant green lizard, and dropping on her knees, reached out an eager little hand to grasp it. But

the lizard was elusive, and darted between some stones out of sight. Carefully Louisita inserted one small fat hand in the crevice; but without success, and she was about to abandon her search when she heard the sound of her father's voice, and the lizard and everything else was forgotten. Here was an old worry that had already brought a pucker to her forehead. Was she never to hear the last of it?

"What a voice!," the padre was saying. "What strength and energy and daring the child has, and what resourcefulness! If only she had been a boy, madre!"

"But she is a girl, Alfonso, and the gift of the good God. If you keep on with these regrets some sorrow may come that will make things worse than they are."

"But think of the money involved," he said. "Millions if I had a son, and without a son nothing, or next to nothing."

"Not nothing, Alfonso," was the answer. "You have a fair competence. Are not there other sorrows that press heavily, without letting this regret poison your life?"

Softly, very softly, Louisita wandered away. In her passionate, loving little heart was a great pain. Her good grandmother was satisfied with her; but her handsome father! To him she was only a girl.

Oh! why had she been made so? Louisita pulled fiercely at her black curls and gave a twist to her white skirt. Did any other girl ever feel such agony and shame? Pretty soon she saw her dark-eyed Mexican nurse coming toward her, and a soft sigh escaped through her parted lips. Marta would surely have some consolation to offer.

The nurse's soft eyes flashed as she listened to the child, and judging it best to try and divert her, she began talking about the novena, or "poseda," that was to commence to-morrow and end on Christmas Eve. Uncles, aunts and cousins, from ranches near and far, were coming for it, and for perhaps the tenth time since their thoughts had turned to Christmas, Louisita listened to Marta's account of each day's "fiesta."

A long corridor in the hacienda had been prepared for the event. Louisita and her Cousin Ramon were to take the parts of Joseph and Mary. Night after night they would walk down the corridor, each carrying a figure of the blessed saint they represented, while behind them would come the other children, in line, singing a Christmas hymn.

At each door they would knock and ask for admission, the young Joseph pleading the cold, and the fatigue of Mary, as a reason why they should find shelter for the night. But in sadness they



would turn away from the constantly reiterated refusal.

"This," said Marta, "is called asking 'poseda,' or resting-place."

On Christmas Eve, called "La Noche Buena," or the beautiful Night, the little procession stops at a door which is opened to them, and they enter. Within is a cave, or grotto, and through some trees that have been set up in the room shines a soft light which rests on the manger where lies the "Nacimiento," or new-born Babe, with His Mother kneeling beside Him.

"And I am to be that Mother!" said Louisita.

"With Ramon for the blessed Saint Joseph," continued Marta, "and some of the other children dressed as angels and shepherds will accompany you. It will be a pretty scene, carina."

"And then the 'pinata,' sighed Louisita, "and in the evening the 'fuegos de bengal,' and 'cohetes' (sky-rockets)! Will the time ever come, Marta?"

"It is coming fast enough," said the nurse good-naturedly. "Now come in the house, cara. Hark! there is the 'Abuela' calling us."

\* \* \* \* \*

"And so, carissima, you understand that 'El Nino Dios' is a Love-Gift to men. You must remember that when you play 'poseda.' "

"Si, si, cara Abuela," answered the child.

"Now run out, carina," said the grand-mother. "I shall have to keep Marta this afternoon to help me get the rooms ready for the aunts and cousins who come to-night; but you can play by yourself—only be a good child."

Louisita ran past her father's study, pausing for a moment to peep in the door through her curls. But the handsome man who sat at his table, writing, glanced at her for a moment and then resumed his work. He heard the child come out on the wide gallery with careless, dancing feet, heard her spring down the steps to the hard clay walk below, and then scamper away.

"She is a butterfly," he said, and knew not that the heart of his little daughter was near to breaking.

"If only I could be a love-gift," she thought, "then, perhaps, 'el padre' would love me."

## II.

Down by the river, the beautiful Guadalupe, was a path that led northward over the hills to where an abandoned and partly ruined adobe house stood at the entrance to a stone quarry.

It was a favorite walk with Louisita, and as the river was shallow, easily forded, and perfectly safe, she was allowed to wander along its banks at will. No one would harm the child, so when Marta was

busy her charge roamed the country, free as a bird, and, save when the one cloud on her horizon pressed heavily, happy and care-free. This afternoon she was not happy. Her gentle grandmother was good to her, Marta was always kind; but her father! How cold he was, how indifferent—and she worshipped him so. She longed so for his love and caresses, such as she had seen her cousins Juanita and Elena receive from their fathers.

Her mother—where was she? “She must be up in heaven,” sighed Louisita. “If she was here would she love me, or would she be cold because I am not a boy?”

Somewhere, tucked away in her little brain, was the memory of a fair face bending over her crib, of tender hands smoothing her hair; but that was so long ago—and the remembrance was so dim and fleeting. If she tried to think, the face would fade, and instead she would see the gentle old ‘Abuela,’ her father’s mother, with her dark face framed in its snowy hair. Perhaps that other vision was the Blessed Madre, who sometimes comes down on earth to comfort little motherless children, so Marta said.

Presently the child was running along the path above the river, and in a few moments more she had come in sight of the little adobe cabin that usually

ended her walk, her grandmother having forbidden her to enter the quarry for fear she would fall into one of the excavations.

Louisita paused in astonishment. Smoke was curling up from the chimney of the little cabin, and a handsome fair-haired boy of about sixteen sat in front of the house, engaged in the world-old occupation of whittling.

Louisita hardly dared to move. Who was he, and what was he doing here? Presently the boy arose, and without glancing in her direction, he started down the hill toward the quarry and was soon lost to sight.

The coast being clear, Louisita advanced to the open door of the cabin, but again her steps were arrested. This time it was a voice—the sweetest voice—singing the dear cradle-song, “El Rorro.”

“A la rorro, nino,  
A la rorro, ro  
Duermete, bien mio,  
Duermete, mi amor.”

Mystified, fascinated, the child drew nearer and nearer, till she stood in the doorway. The song ceased, and she was in time to see a fair, beautiful woman carry a sleeping child toward a low bed that stood in a corner of the room, and gently lay it down. Drawing some light covering over the child, the stranger turned toward the door.

"Victor," she called, softly, "Victor!" and then her eye fell on Louisita, standing motionless just without the door, and she paused.

Was she turned to stone, this beautiful lady, and who was she?

Louisita scarcely dared to breathe, as the stranger gazed at her without uttering a sound. Was it always to be thus, thought the child. Her father had just looked at her with cold, unmeaning eyes and now this lovely vision, who might be the Blessed Madre for all she knew, just looked and looked, and would not speak.

The tension was too great, and in another moment she had cast herself upon the ground and burst into tears. But she was lifted up. Soft arms were encircling her, and the tenderest voice was whispering words of love and comfort. If this was the Blessed Madre, no wonder that "El Nino" loved her so.

"Your name, carissima?"

"Louisita Martinez, senora."

"Ah! I thought so," and again she was wrapped in a soft caress. "Tell me, little one, have you a mother?"

"No," said Louisita. The question brought back all her sorrow. "No, senora, and my father does not love me."

"How is that, little one?"

"Because I am only a girl," answered the child, "and if 'el padre' had a son he would be rich—oh, very rich indeed! How I wish I could be changed into a boy!"

"Do not cry any more, carissima. Christmas is coming, and perhaps the angels will bring some love-gift to make your father happy. Now, let us go out into the sunshine and think of something else."

Hand in hand the two went outside the cabin and sat down on the bench which the boy called Victor had vacated. How friendly the lovely lady was, how many questions she asked her! Presently Louisita's tongue was going very fast and she forgot all about the sorrows of being a girl. The senora was interested in everything, most of all in hearing about the "poseda," and the part Louisita was to take in it. They were deep in conversation when a clear whistle sounded from the direction of the quarry and the next moment the fairhaired boy came in sight.

"This is my brother, Victor," said the senora, and rising quickly, she went to meet the boy and said a few words to him that Louisita could not hear. The child gazed shyly at the tall youth, who speedily made friends with her, so that soon she was chatting as gaily to him as she had been doing to his sister.

There was a slight sound from the interior of the house, and the senora arose and disappeared, in a few moments coming out again holding in her arms a bundle wrapped in a white wool blanket.

"Come here, carissima," she said; "I have something to show you."

Louisita moved toward the wide gallery, that was almost as large as the cabin itself, and stood, eager, expectant, while the senora turned down the blanket that enveloped the small bundle on her lap, revealing to the child's delighted eyes the most adorable baby.

"Oh, the darling!" said Louisita, "how beautiful! It might be 'El Nino' Himself, that is, if it is a boy, senora?"

"Yes, carissima, it is a boy—my little son. He was born last Christmas, so he is nearly a year old, and his name is Jose Cristiano."

Louisita was down on her knees examining the pink toes and tightly closed fists of little Jose, caressing his dark, curly head, and smiling into his laughing blue eyes. How dear he was! How soft and warm, and flushed with sleep! The dainty mouth was parted with a roguish smile. Clearly Jose Cristiano was not in the least afraid of her. She began to talk to him, receiving in reply soft gurgling sounds

that enchanted her; so she did not hear the lovely senora say to her brother in a low voice:

"You see the likeness, Victor?"

"Wonderful," he answered. "It will make everything come right, 'hermana, mia.' "

As if in confirmation of his uncle's assertion, Jose Cristiano laughed aloud. It was fully half an hour later before Louisita could tear herself away, but she finally left, promising to come again.

\* \* \* \* \*

The grandmother listened to her story—marking the flushed, sparkling little face. The adobe house she knew was sometimes occupied by wanderers from one city to another. These were some traveling Mexicans, probably, and would soon be gone. Her mind was occupied with her expected guests, so she paid less heed than usual to Louisita's prattle, and presently the child, noticing the divided attention she was receiving, ceased her tale.

### III.

"The 'pinata!' Ramon, the 'pinata!' "

"This way," said the boy. "This way, Louisita, down the back stairs, and we will get there before the others."

The youthful Joseph and Mary, who had just made their nightly pilgrimage of asking "poseda,"



coming at last to the empty room that had been prepared for "El Nino," or the little Christ Child, on the morrow, now fled down the back stairs to the lower "patio," or hall, where, as they expected, they were the first comers.

Hanging in the centre of the hall was the "pinata," which to-night was a harlequin, covered with bells. It hung suspended by a stout rope from the ceiling.

"There is just one more day," said Louisita, "and to-morrow night, Ramon, there will be 'El Nino' in the manger that has been empty all these eight nights, and every one—all the grownups—are coming to see it."

"And there will be the best 'pinata' of all to-morrow," said Ramon. "I know, for old Carolina told me. It is to be a fat 'negrito,' the image of old Pancho, her husband."

"Splendid," cried Louisita. "Oh, here they come, Ramon! Now for the fun!"

The door at the end of the 'patio' burst open, and in trooped the young friends and cousins. Arming themselves with sticks, one child after another was blind-folded and proceeded to bombard the 'pinata,' giving it vigorous blows, or missing it altogether, while peals of laughter resounded through the hall.

The painted harlequin swung this way and that as sometimes a youthful boy or girl hit it a more than

commonly hard blow. One after another essayed his or her skill until it was Ramon's turn again, and this time the expected happened. His stick came down on the china jar inside the clown, breaking it into a thousand pieces, and out came a shower of dulces, bon-bons and fruits. In the wild scramble that followed little boys and girls went under, and emerged breathless and triumphant with hands and pockets stuffed full of sweets.

The tall Juanita, who had seen a Christmas-tree in the North, voted that the nine days' Mexican Christmas far surpassed it.

"There is nothing like it," she said to Louisita, whose mouth, full of "confites," or small sugar-plums, was pursed up like a button. "And, then, think of tomorrow, when 'El Nino' will be in the manger, and we will all play being in Bethlehem."

"And the presents," said Louisita. "I have something for everybody."

"And each present is a secret," said Juanita. "The only thing that is not a secret is 'El Nino'—the Love-Gift. That is for the whole world, Louisita."

#### IV.

"Where can they be?" said Louisita aloud. "No one here but Jose, and I have called and called. The senora never leaves 'El Nino' alone."

She stood in perplexity, a little pucker on her forehead, and considered.

A most beautiful idea had come into her mind when she listened to the words of her Cousin Juanita, the previous night. God had given "El Nino" to the world as His Love-Gift to men; but she, Louisita, could give a love-gift to her father, and what better than Jose Cristiano, with his laughing eyes? Happy little Jose, who was a boy and not a girl! Who knows but that her father might accept him as a son, and then peace would reign

The lovely senora would surely consent. The wide, low hacienda was so much better a place for "El Nino" to live in than the adobe cabin up on the hill. Full of her idea, the child had sped up the mountain trail on her quest, late on the afternoon of the 24th of December, all her eager little heart intent on her plan. But surprises awaited her. Jose Cristiano was there, lying on his bed of straw in one corner of the room; but there was no sight or sound of his mother or uncle, though Louisita called and called.

What should she do? It was growing late, and it devolved on her and Ramon to have the room representing the stable ready for the final "poseda" which was to be at seven o'clock. To be sure, there was the wax "Nino" for the manger, but Louisita

had set her heart on having a living one. What a surprise it would be for her father!

Jose Cristiano settled the question. Laughing aloud, he held out his arms to Louisita. "You want to go with me, you darling?" she said. And with many happy sounds he made known that he did. To carry him alone would be impossible, but the youthful Joseph was not far away. Quickly Louisita ran to the top of the hill where began the descent of the mountain trail.

"Ramon," she called, "Ramon!"

The boy emerged from behind a tree, and answered her call with rapid, swinging steps. In another moment he was by her side.

"The senora is not here," said Louisita, "but I am going to take 'El Nino', for I know she won't mind. But you must write a note, Ramon, and tell her we have take Jose Cristiano to the 'poseda' to be a love-gift."

Arrived at the adobe, with much labor on the boy's part, and many instructions from Louisita, the note was written and pinned to the wooden wall over the low trundle-bed; then Ramon lifted the heavy baby in his strong arms, and the little cavalcade began the descent of the hill.

"Isn't it exciting?" said Louisita. "I feel just as

if we were really the Blessed Madre and St. Joseph, with 'El Nino Dios,' don't you, Ramon?"

"Hadrn't thought of it," answered the boy "but I wish we had brought your burro, Louisita, so you and 'El Nino' could ride. He's a pretty heavy one to carry."

"It's not far," said the little "madre," consolingly. "And we only give love-gifts once a year, Ramon."

Jose Cristiano was getting sleepy, and presently his head dropped on Ramon's shoulder and he was in the land of dreams.

Softly the pair stole up to the back of the hacienda. Old Carolina, in the kitchen, caught sight of them in the fast waning light, and marked a white bundle in Ramon's arms; but they encountered no one else, and presently they were safely in the house and speeding down the corridor. Now they were in the room set apart and decortaed for the festivities, and as Louisita removed the wax Christ Child from the manger, the youthful Joseph laid the love-gift in the spot left vacant, relaxing his tired arms of their burden. 'El Nino' was in a profound sleep, and softly Louisita covered him with the little white blanket she had taken care to bring with her—then the boy and girl left the room, and locking the door after them, the head of the little family put the key in his pocket and the two scampered away to get

ready for the "poseda." They were back in twenty minutes, dressed "en costume," and lighting the candles in the room, they took their places by the manger and awaited the advent of the shepherds, and the visitors who always came in their train.

\* \* \* \* \*

Down the corridor came a long line of young people, singing the Christmas hymn. At the head of the procession walked Juanita and her brother Roberto, while at the end of the line came the master of the house, his gentle old mother, and their guests. Beyond these appeared all the household servants, ending up with the fat Carolina and her husband, Pancho.

Every one was dressed for the great "fiesta," the winding up of the nine days' "poseda," and every one was anxious to see the grotto; for had not Louisa thrown out hints that there was to be a wonderful surprise!

Now they were at the door at last; in answer to their knock it flew open as if by magic; and in another moment all had filed in and placed themselves around the room, some here, some there, all talking in subdued tones and admiring the artistic appearance of the scene.

Very pretty was the arrangement of the manger, the dresses of the youthful Mary and Joseph, the

soft light from the candles, and the lifelike figures of the sheep surrounding the stall. Clear and sweet rose the voices of the children as they commenced the cradle-song to "El Nino." It was the last act before the fun and merriment began.

"A la rorro, Nino," they sang and then suddenly a hush fell on the crowd; for oh! wonder of wonders, the white blanket that covered the little "Nino" began to move, one naked little arm flew out, followed by a pink foot and sturdy leg, and from the depths of the manger came a series of soft, enchanting sounds. Jose Cristiano was showing his appreciation of the wonderful scene!

With her white hood falling over her dark curls, and an expression of rapture and joy on her eager brilliant little face, the young "Madre" arose, and lifting the little "Nacimiento" in her arms, carried him across the room and held him out to her astonished father.

"My Christmas present to you, 'padre,' " she said. "He is the love-gift. See how beautiful he is, and 'El bueno Dios' means him to be your son. With this love-gift, 'padre,' you will have all that money you could not have with me."

The crowd seemed struck dumb as the clear child-voice floated through the room—all but Jose Cristiano. Those twinkling lights and gold and silver

bells that hung just above his head enchanted him—and then he knew he was safe in those strong little arms that held him so tight, so he laughed aloud, and hearing that rippling laughter, a low murmur ran through the crowd.

Only for a moment. There was a noise in the corridor, a sound of voices, and the door was flung open to admit Louisita's Uncle Raphael, and behind him was the senora, very pale and wild, and keeping close to her, her young brother, Victor.

Of course the senora would come—Louisita had expected that. But she was not prepared for what followed. It was "el padre," her own father, who, with a cry, sprang forward and knelt at the lovely senora's feet.

"Marguerita," he was saying, "you have come back. Can you forgive me now?"

In a second the kind Uncle Rafael had cleared the room of every one but herself and "El Nino," and this strange father and the beautiful senora; and then—and then—it was all most wonderful—they were weeping in each other's arms and talking about strange things.

The senora was saying how she and Victor heard a cry for help from the quarry, where an old Mexican had fallen and had been badly hurt. She had only left "El Nino" for about half an hour; but when she



got back he was gone. She had found Ramon's note, and had come at once for her child. Now she would go away and leave "el padre" in peace. But the "padre," with a light shining in his eyes such as Louisita had never seen, said that now he could never let her go, and that everything was all his fault, and then "El Nino's" mother said it was all hers.

"I was proud," she said. "I could not bear the sting of knowing I had not given you what you wanted; and then I lived in such dread of a second disappointment, that I went away, and our little son was born under my father's roof."

"On Christmas day," whispered Louisita to little Jose Cristiano. "El Nino" nodded and looked wise. Indeed, it was very wonderful; but after all only a part of that vast cloud country in which he lived, where all was new and strange.

But suddenly the father and mother remembered their children, and smiling through her tears, the lovely senora came toward them, and lifting little Jose in her arms, held him up to his delighted father.

"Our love-gift," she said. "Louisita's and mine. Take him, Alfonso."

Was it through a mist of tears that Louisita saw "El Nino" in her father's arms? Here was the end of all worry and trouble about being a girl! And now

tender arms were encircling her, and the sweetest voice spoke her name.

"Carissima," it said, "my brave little girl! It is you who have made our Christmas happy—you who have given us our love-gift. You must love me now, my child, my little daughter; for I am your mother."

## A MODERN UTOPIA.

## I.

The old grass-grown sun-dial stood well out on the extreme edge of the cliff, away from surrounding trees, and at a point where it caught the first beams of the morning sun as it rose in the East, and its last rays as it sank below the Atlantic Ocean on the West. Back from the cliffs stood the church, its steep stone roof rising high above the trees, the summit of its round tower standing sixty feet from the ground. Near the top of this tower a window, facing the ocean, was cut in the stone, and here some Lord of Thomond had placed a lamp to lighten any mariners who might be driven too near the coast during a storm. The gate at one end of the churchyard was opened by a stout peasant woman, who dropped a courtesy to the tall lady and gentleman who entered.

"Wisha!" said the kind Irishwoman, as she watched them pass into the church, "wisha! but I'm thinking 'tis sorry this day that sees our lady come home."

Once within the church, the lady turned her sweet face toward the sanctuary, where the red light burned above the altar. How many years was it since she had worshipped in this spot? Quickly and softly

she and her husband sought their pew. Both were still comparatively young, perhaps not yet forty-five, but the man's handsome, patrician head was silver-white, and above his wife's sweet eyes there was a fine line of pain drawn across the brow.

It was several minutes before either had the courage to raise their eyes to a memorial tablet that hung on the wall above their pew. Then, simultaneously, and as if by mutual consent, each arose, and with hands clasped stood looking up at two exquisite marble figures that rested on bronze pedestals on either side of the tablet. Long they looked—till the tears almost blinded them.

"They are wonderfully alike," the gentleman finally said.

"I could not have dreamed they would be so perfect," the lady answered, very low.

Their gaze took in two fair, childlike figures; that of a boy about five, and a girl of three. It was easy to see in the latter, a handsome little creature with straight features and noble head thrown back, a likeness to the tall gentleman standing near—the boy, of more slender and graceful build than his sister, had the wide brow, deep-set, thoughtful eyes and short, curling upper lip that in his mother showed her imaginative and artistic temperament.

The lady's eyes wandered to the tablet, and slowly,

as if each word brought her darlings back to her, she read what it said:

"Donall, Baron Burren, aged five years. Mona, his sister, aged three years. Only children of John, nineteenth Earl of Thomond. Died in the great earthquake in Peru, August 15, 1868."

*"Credo videre bona Domini in terra viventium. Expecta Dominum viriliter age: et confortetur cor tuum, et sustine Dominum."*

Had she not trusted and been strong, poor grief-stricken mother!—and comfort? Well, thank God, divine comfort during these seventeen years of sorrow had indeed been hers.

The strain, however, of seeing for the first time these monuments they had erected to their children's memory had been almost too much. Realizing this, the gentleman made a movement as if to depart.

"We had better go, Mary," he said. "We are home for good now, and can come often."

Still hand in hand, like two children, they passed out into the sweet May sunshine. The breeze from the sea swept over the ancient churchyard and the afternoon sun cast long, sharp shadows across the sun-dial, lighting up the surrounding crosses and monuments in a golden glory.

"Everything is unchanged," said the lady. "Oh, John, it is good to be home and with our own again."

\* \* \* \* \*

Some seventeen years earlier, a young woman and two children might have been seen down on the shore near Castle Thomond on a fair September morning. The boy, a slender manly little fellow, was talking; his sweet voice, of peculiar clearness, sounding distinct above the booming of the sea and the clamoring of the sea-gulls as they winged their flight over the water.

"And is it to-morrow we go, Duly dear?" he said.

"To-morrow, alanna, and sure it's the long journey across land and sea that we'll be taking, with days and nights on the great deep, till we reach the other side, please God."

"To Peru," said the child, "where papa's coffee plantations are; but I would rather stay here, Duly dear."

At that the nurse threw her apron over her head and began to cry. Four year old Donall twined his arms around her neck with sweet words of baby comfort, while the two year old Mona stopped playing with the shining sand she had been digging up on the shore and, realizing that something was wrong, added her lament to that of her nurse.

Presently the woman dried her tears and strained the children to her bosom passionately.

"Shure, my darlints," she said, "I am after being

torn this way and that. To let you go without me, 'twould be worse than death, but to leave the dear old country and my man's grave—ah! its the sore heart I have."

The baby had returned to her digging in the sand, but the boy listened, his delicate, sensitive face responding to every word. Did he not love it too, his country of legend and charm, so full of wonderful things which had so often been recounted for his benefit by the warm-hearted Irish nurse?

Small and slender in build, with raven-black hair and dark eyes, Julia McNamara was a type of the Irish race which a student of history would have traced back to the Firbolgs, those early inhabitants of the West of Ireland. Married at twenty and left a widow a year later, her own infant dying at the same time, she had gone to the castle of the Earl of Thomond, John, nineteenth of his line, to act as foster-mother to the little son and heir just born. Passionately attached to her nursling, she had remained with him, and now was about to accompany the family to South America—imperative business interests making it necessary for the Lord of Thomond to return for a time to a country where he had, indeed, been born.

In the days when Ireland's sons, driven by cruel necessity, were seeking new homes throughout the

world—a majority in France and Spain—a son of the house of O'Brien had emigrated to Peru. Here he had succeeded, and had amassed riches in vast coffee plantations, until his great-grandson through the failure of an heir in the direct line, had, toward the middle of the nineteenth century, found himself Earl of Thomond. The wealth at his command enabled him to restore the family estate, and here he had settled down, strengthening his home feeling for Ireland by marrying an Irish wife; and here, near the wild west coast, within sight and sound of the Atlantic, the two children, Donall and Mona, had been born.

On this September morning in the year 1867, the last day had arrived before their departure, and children and nurse had come for a final farewell to their favorite haunt, an inlet on the coast, just below Thomond Castle. Seeing his nurse's grief, the boy, with tact beyond his years, sought to divert her.

Old legends of giants and fairies, of the great deeds of the men of his house in bygone days, floated through his brain.

"Tell me, Duly," he said, "about Mac Conmara, lord of the sea."

The nurse, who was proud of her knowledge of Gaelic history, readily responded.

"Shure," she said, "twas Mac Conmara, son of



Cumara, eight hundred years ago, who was lord of the sea in these parts. A brave gossoon was he."

"And that is where you get your name, Duly dear? Tell me again what it all means."

The nurse clasped her hands and looked out over the wide Atlantic sparkling in the morning sun.

"Perhaps it was right along this coast," she continued, "that he sailed—Mac Conmara, from whom all the Mac Namara's are descended. 'Twas the father of him as was named Cumara. 'Cu' means warrior, and 'Mara,' of the sea. You understand, alanna?"

"Yes," answered the child.

"And 'brian' means great strength," said the nurse "'Twas O'Brian of your house who was descended from Brian-Boru, whose ancestor was Cormac Cas, son of the king of Munster and grandson, on his mother's side, of Conn of the Hundred Battles."

"Tell me about the 'Stone of Destiny' where our kings were crowned," said the little boy, "and about the Hall of Tara and Deirdre the beautiful, and about the giant Irish elks."

Julia, the nurse, laughed as heartily as a few moments ago she had cried.

"Listen, alanna," she said, "there is the dinner-bell. Wishe! but its home we must be going for the

last meal in the dear old country till God knows when."

## II.

Two people, an elderly lady and a young girl, were coming along the road in an Irish jaunting-car. This mode of travel seemed to be one of preference, for the car was a handsome one, and so was the horse that arched its beautiful neck as it trotted rapidly over the ground.

A bend in the road showed them a lady on foot coming toward them; in her hand was a basket full of white spring blossoms.. The elder occupant of the jaunting-car bowed and uttered a cheery "Good morning," as she passed the one on foot. The young girl turned her head for a moment.

"What a lovely face," she said, "like a Madonna, and she has turned into the gate that leads up the hill to the churchyard. Who is she, Lady Rose?"

"That is the Countess of Thomond," was the answer, "and she is taking those spring blossoms to deck the marble statues of her two children in our church."

"Oh, how sad!" said the young girl, a cloud overshadowing her bright face, "but she has other children, has she not?"

"No," answered Lady Rose, "those two were her all. She lost them seventeen years ago under very distressing circumstances.

"Do tell me about it, Lady Rose; this Ireland of yours is full of sad and wonderful things."

"In this case," said the other, "the incidents happened in Peru. Seventeen years ago, the present Earl of Thomond, who was born in South America, had to go back there to look after his business interests. He left, meaning to be gone for twelve months only. It was near the expiration of that time when he started for a short trip to some plantations he owned far in the interior, taking his wife with him and leaving his children with a trusted nurse. He had done this before with no uneasiness, as the nurse was absolutely devoted to the children. During his absence, however, occurred the great earthquake in Peru of 1868. It did not touch the plantation where he and his wife were, one hundred and fifty miles away; but its full force was felt on the land where his house was. He returned to find his home in ruins, the people on his estate scattered, dead or dying, and the children nowhere to be found. A fire broke out in the house right after the earthquake and burned everything that was not already destroyed. There seemed no doubt that the children

and their nurse perished either in the earthquake or the fire."

"Oh, how dreadful!" said the young girl. "I don't wonder poor Lady Thomond looks so sad. Did they come right back to Ireland after that?"

"No," answered Lady Rose, "they remained away for seventeen years, part of the time in South America, and later travelling on the Continent. They could not bring themselves to return to their desolate home, but now they are with us again, they say for good."

They drove into the market town as she uttered these words and soon were bargaining with various tradesmen. Lady Rose Fetherstonhaugh, a widow without children, and owning a large estate which she farmed herself, had engaged as companion, six months earlier, the young girl who had accompanied her on the drive—a native of Dublin, half Spanish, half Irish, named Maria Esparza.

### III.

"I think I have had the same thought," said Thomond, looking kindly at his wife, who sat in front of him, her delicate beauty and deep blue eyes set off by her dress of some soft black stuff that fell around her in graceful folds. They were in the library of

their own castle, not long after their home-coming. Now the lady arose and walked to the window, her long skirts trailing behind her. There was something pathetic in her attitude, as of one who looks and watches for what never comes.

"Yes," she said, turning around. "We must try and live now for others, John, and not be selfish in our grief. Ireland is weighed down with poverty, and with crime as a result of poverty and injustice. Hundreds and thousands of our young men and women are pouring out across the Atlantic, and something must be done to keep them at home. We, John, with our wealth, can make a beginning."

Her husband showed by his manner how deep was his own interest in their project.

"I talked it over with Lady Rose Fetherstonhaugh this morning," he said. "She sees the need of all I suggest, but she is inclined to think it a Utopian dream."

"And why not, John?" answered his wife, her interest and animation making her pale face beautiful. "Why not? Let us have a little Utopia in our poor corner of Ireland. Let us make some men and women self-supporting and happy. Let us keep here for their old Irish mothers the sons and daughters it rends their hearts to lose."

Her voice broke. Was she thinking of her own

darlings, lost to her so many years ago? Well, since she had lost them and knew what that suffering meant, let her do what she could to keep back the tears from other eyes.

"We can do it, John," she said, "and we will. All around us are the conditions ripe for a Gaelic revival. It may not come for ten, twenty or thirty years; but we can plant some seed. This estate embraces a large tract, to the south, of improved land. Let us build houses and try to revive some of the great Irish industries that have almost died out; let it include schools where the children can be taught not only a trade, but also our beautiful ancient tongue."

"We will do it," he answered, catching her enthusiasm. "I will go up to Dublin to-morrow, Mary, and engage an architect and workmen, and we will glean all the practical information we can as to the best way to go to work."

"It is so I would have had my dear ones brought up if they had lived," she said, "to love and work for others. Our Utopia will be their memorial, John."

\* \* \* \* \*

On the morrow, the Lord of Thomond journeyed to Dublin. He was gone a week and returned full of plans.

"It begins to look like a grand scheme, Mary,"

he said, "and I have been fortunate in securing a fine young architect, Francis Esparza, by name. He tells me his sister is living with Lady Rose as companion and secretary. He was quite delighted at getting work to do so near her."

"I have seen the girl," said his wife. "She has a lovely face, John—dark, which I suppose shows her Spanish origin; for they are Spaniards, are they not?"

"Young Esparza told me he was Spanish on the father's side, and Irish on the mother's," answered her husband. "When he was fifteen and his sister thirteen they came back to Ireland, I suppose from Spain, their mother having been left a widow. She possessed considerable money and had them finely educated; but a year ago they lost everything, and since then the children have supported themselves and the mother.

"He tells me his real name is Francesco," continued the Earl, "but he changed it to Francis on settling in his mother's country."

"He must stay here with us," said his wife. "We have plenty of room, and there are no good accommodations in the village."

"It will certainly be best," answered her husband. "He will be right on the spot where I can consult him at any time."

## IV.

The lady of Thomond sat reading under an old oak tree in the park, when a light, elastic footstep fell on her ear.

"Pardon me, Madame," said a voice, "but can you tell me if I am on the right road to Thomond Castle?"

At the same moment the speaker stepped into the sunlight before her, a tall, slender young man, with broad, open brow and dark, serious blue eyes, set rather wide apart. The face of an artist and a dreamer.

He held his valise in one hand and his cap in the other. A breeze that blew straight from the sea lifted the brown hair from his open brow—instinctively the lady knew who it was.

"You are Mr. Esparza," she said; she arose as she spoke and held out her hand. "My husband left the park only a few minutes ago to meet you. I think he did not expect you quite so early."

"It is my fault," said Francis Esparza, "for not sending definite word as to my train. Yet now that I am here, Madame, I am not sorry I had the walk, the country and the sea are so beautiful. I do not wonder that my sister loves it. I turned off the road for a few moments to get a nearer glimpse of



that fine old church on the hill. It must have been then that your husband drove by."

He smiled as he spoke—a smile that lighted up his serious eyes—and glanced out over the wide sweep of the lovely park, then back at the sweet, sad face opposite him.

"You must come to the house," said the Countess, cordially. Involuntarily her heart warmed to this boy with the frank, sunny smile, and thoughtful eyes. "Not like his sister," she thought, as they walked toward the castle, chatting pleasantly. "Her face is dark, and with proud curves, but the brother is fair. He must look like his Irish mother."

\* \* \* \* \*

As the weeks and months passed by the Lady of Thomond saw her dreams being realized—it would not be long now before there was a beginning of her Utopia. Thinking of her poor Irish people and of the numbers who, before many months, would be a part of the great industry she and her husband had planned, her heart knew greater joy and peace than it had felt for long years. With true artist instinct Francis Esparza had combined both beauty and practical use in the buildings he had erected; and now his part of the work was nearly done and, with regret, he turned his thoughts toward leaving.

"I shall have an opening of the works next month," said the Earl. "Manufacturers from Dublin, Manchester, Nottingham and Birmingham have been invited to attend it, and are coming. You must stay with us and take part, Esparza, and your sister, too. She will want you to be present."

So Francis Esparza, nothing loath, had agreed to stay. He saw the great looms put in place, and watched with pride the completion of the beautiful buildings where the industries were to be, and the finishing of the workmen's comfortable cottages.

"Ireland would soon be free from many of her troubles if all her land-lords were like the Earl," he told his sister.

Maria Esparza's dark eyes glowed.

"Ah, 'Francesco mio,' " she said, unconsciously lapsing into the language of their childhood. "He is noble and grand, this Earl. How I would love him and be proud of him if I were his daughter. And is he not handsome, with his dark eyes and silver hair?"

"His eyes are no more beautiful than yours, 'hermana mia,' " said the boy affectionately. "Indeed, they are eyes of the same color—it must be the Irish blood in you, 'carissima.' "

"No, it is you who look like our Irish ancestors,"

said the girl. "Mother has always said I looked like my father's people."

They were walking along the shore near the castle as they talked, and now they commenced scrambling up one of the cliffs; a few moments later and, laughing and breathless, they were at the top of the cliff, close to the old grass-grown sun-dial, near which they sat down for a few moments' rest.

"Eleven o'clock," said the young girl, glancing at the shadow on the dial, "and at twelve, 'Francesco mio,' the Countess is coming to see me about some plans she has for my teaching one of her classes in lace work. Lady Rose is willing to spare me to her for an hour or two every day."

With a few more words, the brother and sister parted, Francis setting out for the buildings in course of completion, three miles distant, Maria going northward toward Lady Rose's farm.

## V.

"I am so glad you will help me in this work," said the Lady of Thomond, "and your lace is beautiful. It was your mother who taught you?"

"Yes," answered Maria, "and I have heard her say so many times that hand-made lace in Ireland

ought to be a great industry; but that she was afraid it would soon die out."

The Countess' eyes glowed.

"That is what we are going to prevent," she said. "I hope soon to have a regular department and a good demand for hand-made lace in our new industry. I have never seen anything more beautiful than this, and I think I am a judge."

She took up several pieces of exquisite lace as she spoke, and turned them over, admiring their graceful patterns and fine mesh, then she arose from her half hour's talk as if to go.

"I have one other style I would like to show you, Countess," said the young girl. "The lace and pattern are rare; for some reason my mother has always been averse to my showing these things, but I feel sure she would not object to my letting you see them."

She opened a drawer as she spoke and took out a small box.

"It is a dress and some other wear that I had as a child," she said, untying the cord around the box. "The dress is of the finest white Irish linen and the lace, Countess, is beautiful."

She lifted them out of the box as she spoke and spread them out before her guest. For a moment the Lady of Thomond looked at the little garments

that lay before her, yellow with age. With dilated eyes, and an expression whose agony Maria Esparza never forgot, she lifted up the dress with trembling hands, and turned it over and over, as if to imprint on her memory all its tender fragrance forever. One glance she gave at the young girl, who, with dark, startled eyes, stood spellbound. The veil that had seemed drawn across her own eyes in the past year was lifted. Why had she not seen it? Why had no one seen it? There, every lineament recalled, the poise of the head, the look in the soft, brown eyes, the Countess saw her husband reproduced, as she had fondly and proudly traced the likeness years ago in her baby daughter. Nature could bear no more. Without a cry, with only a low, gasping exclamation: "My God, my God!" the Lady of Thomond reeled backward and fell fainting across the bed, still clasping the little dress to her heart.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Earl of Thomond sat in his library writing. He was alone when there came a tap on the door.

"A priest from Dublin to see you, sir," said the neat maid who entered. "He gave the name of Father Conway, though he said you would not know it. His business, he says, is urgent."

"Show ~~him~~ in here," said the Earl. Such calls

were frequent, so he laid down his pen and arose to receive his guest.

The priest who presently entered, an elderly man with a pleasant, intelligent face, bowed on seeing the Earl.

"You are welcome," was the cordial greeting. "In what way can I serve you, Father?"

"I come on urgent business, my Lord," was the answer, "and the bearer, I hope, of good tidings; but you must prepare for strange news."

He took the chair his host indicated as he spoke, and the latter sat down again at his desk. The priest drew from an inner pocket an envelope, which he held a moment in one hand ere handing it to the Earl.

"My Lord," he said, solemnly, "this is the confession of a dying woman, one who has wronged you and yours very deeply. I was called to her bedside day before yesterday and she made a full and complete statement which I have written down for you. It is signed by her own hand, and is duly witnessed and attested. When I left Dublin last night, my Lord, the woman was dead."

"I did not think I had an enemy in the world," answered the Earl. "Certainly I know of no one against whom I have any feeling of bitterness."

He took the envelope from the priest's hand as he

spoke and slowly drew out and unfolded the sheets of paper.

Was it some dislike to settling the uncertainty and doubt in his mind as to who the woman was—some half defined dread, in spite of the priest telling him he was the bearer of good news—that made him forbear turning the page in search of the signature?

From beginning to end the Earl read—only once uttering a deep exclamation, the while the priest preserved a sympathetic silence. The document, weighed with so much importance, was long, the priest having written it as nearly as possible in the woman's words.

This is what the Earl read:

“My Lord:—This letter will come to you like a voice from the dead; for you believe that I died seventeen years ago. But I have lived—seventeen miserable years, in which I have been haunted day and night by the thought of the wrong I have done you and the sweet lady—your Countess.

“I am dying now, my Lord, and must speak, and, as far as I can, make reparation, although nothing I can do will ever blot out the sorrow and agony of those years in which you and your wife have believed your children to be dead—for they are not dead, my Lord, but alive and well—and they believe me—

miserable and unhappy wretch as I am—to be their mother.

“You remember that terrible night when you thought your darlings perished with me in the fire that destroyed your home in Peru? When the first shock of the earthquake was felt, I had just reached the nursery with the children, who were still dressed, to put them to bed. Taking them in my arms, I fled from the house. All was darkness and confusion, men and women running hither and thither, screaming wildly. No one noticed us or recognized us in our flight.

“My only thought was to reach an open field where we would be in comparative safety till the disturbance was over, but, in my excitement, I kept on running until I was a mile from the house. By a miracle I avoided the crevices in the ground, and when at last I came to a standstill, with the children held close in my arms, the danger seemed to be past.

“All was silence and semi-darkness, and I had just decided to wait until dawn to make my way back to the house when I heard a sound, on the road nearby, that I knew.

“ ‘Jose,’ I called. The man answered and came quickly toward me. You remember Jose, my Lord, a man who had a large plantation not far from yours. He had been courting me for three months,



and I was not unwilling to listen to him, save for the love I bore for my nursling, your son, Donall.

"Can you guess the rest? All that night Jose pleaded and prayed. He had sold his land and was about to go North, where he had bought another plantation. I must go with him, he said—and the children, also, as I would not be parted from the boy. He would adopt them and call them his. You and my Lady would think they perished in the fire, the smoke of which we could plainly see from the woods to which we had retired. In the end I yielded. In Jose's canvas-covered ox-cart we traveled to the next town, where we were married, and then came a long journey north, of one thousand miles, till we reached our new home, and here we settled down.

"Jose was kind to me and to the children, and at first I thought I was happy, but not for long. Little Donall had a serious illness which helped to make him forget the past. Mona, being only three years, forgot very quickly, and both children have grown up believing they are mine and Esparza's.

"When my husband died, ten years after our marriage, he left me well off. I sold his plantation and returned to Ireland with the two children, but I dared not go farther than Dublin.

"You will not have far to seek your children, my Lord. Your son is already in your house, your

daughter living nearby. In so far as I could I have brought them up as befitted their real station in life. They have been well educated, and they are both good and pure—worthy of the illustrious name and lineage that they will soon know is theirs.

"I scarcely dare hope, my Lord, for yours and your Lady's forgiveness, but when in the future you think of me, let it be as one whose sin was her own worst punishment. I have heard the cry of my Lady's heart for her children all these years, but until now I have not had the courage to confess. Oh, my Lord, in mercy, forgive me. Your unhappy, miserable servant.

"Julia.

"(Signed) Julia (McNamara) Esparza."

Was it half an hour, one hour, or two hours that the Earl sat there with bowed head and read the words that meant for him such agony and joy? He never knew, and the priest, with admirable patience, waited until, finally, the Lord of Thomond folded up the sheets of paper that he had read half a dozen times, and arose like a man in a dream.

"Tell me more, Father," he said. "But come outside. I need time and the help of God to realize it all."

Once seated under the trees on the lawn, the priest went into all the particulars of his visit to the unhappy Julia.

"She made this statement before witnesses, my Lord," said the priest. "I wanted to summon the children, who still believe she is their mother, but she would not let me. 'No,' she said, 'I made their real mother suffer for years. It is not fitting that I should have the consolation of seeing them now.' "

"Poor woman!" said the Earl, with deep emotion. "May God forgive her as I do."

The blue eyes of the priest shone.

"Heaven bless you my Lord," he said. "That is a victory gained."

In the Lord of Thomond's heart surprise and bewilderment were giving place to the joy of realization of all that the future held for him, and with it came the thought of his wife and of impatience to tell her all.

"I must find my wife," he said. "She went out some time ago and has not yet come back."

Even as he spoke, a gentleman on horseback galloped up the avenue and drew rein before the Earl and priest.

"Oh, my Lord," he called, "I am sent to bid you come at once to Rosemont, where your wife lies very ill. She has come out of one faint only to fall into another, and no one knows what is the matter. You can take my horse," he continued, "there is no time to lose."

His wife ill! The Earl leaped into the saddle. "Thank you, McDermot," he said; then to a groom who at that moment appeared—mindful even in his anxiety about his wife of his duties as a host: "Harness a wagon for these gentlemen, Patrick, and drive them to Rosemont. You will follow me, Father," he said, turning to the priest, "my wife may need you."

"At once, my son," said the priest.

\* \* \* \* \*

"It is not a dream," said the Countess. "They are really alive, my precious darlings, and I shall see them soon?"

"They are here, my beloved," said the Earl, with deep emotion. "They know all, and are longing to see you. Our son says that now he knows why the sound of your voice has haunted him from the first moment he came here."

"Let me see them," said the Countess, sitting up. "I am well and strong now, John, and oh! I have waited so long."

The Lady of Thomond was in her own room, having been moved, while still insensible, several weeks ago. The Earl arose and crossed the room. All the pride of his race, as well as a father's love, was in his voice and attitude as he threw open the door

and saw the handsome youth and young girl in the hall.

"My dear children," he said "come."

In a second the brother and sister were kneeling by the Countess' chair.

"Sweet mother," said Donall, "Now I know why I love you so."

"Beloved mother," said Mona, "how happy we are all going to be now!"

Are there not moments of joy that sometimes compensate for years of pain?

The Lady of Thomond raised her happy eyes to her husband's. "Now I know," she said, "what it means to 'wait for the Lord;' and we found our darlings through our Utopia, John. The little dress that I recognized as my Mona's makes us sure that Julia's tale is true."

"Dearest mother," said Donall, "we must love your Utopia, and live and work for it—even as you and my father have done. It was planned as our memorial. Now it will be Mona's and my thanksgiving."

## GABRIELLE.

To a traveller standing on the mountain side in south-eastern France the first dawn, as the sun rose behind the hills, was one of surpassing beauty. The fresh green turf of early spring, and the trees laden with white blossoms, were touched with a rosy light; while the river in the valley took on a soft, silvery sheen. Every object stood out clear and distinct like a cameo, a sharpness and yet delicacy of outline that was lost later in the day.

The knight coming up the mountain side with his men at arms was young, and attuned both by age and nature to the loveliness of the scene, so half way up the steep path he paused and removed his helmet to let the delicious morning breeze fan his brow. A pale golden light pervaded every spot and gave mystery and beauty to the meanest objects. Everything sang the morning psalm of life, with no foreshadowing of approaching danger. But just as the knight bared his head to the breeze an arrow whistled by, followed by another; and even as the men at arms closed around their master with raised shields they heard a wild cry far up the height that went echoing through the ravine at their right.

"Forward!" cried the knight as he quickly replaced his helmet; and without loss of time he and his followers charged up the steep path till they reached the summit of the mountain path.

But they found nothing, and careful search of the ravine failed to reveal any sign of human life, so after an hour they gave up the quest and resumed their journey.

As they descended the hill on the other side, valley, river, and plain lay stretched before them, while the pine-clothed ravines and near-by rocky peaks lent grandeur and solemnity to the scene. The knight uttered a prayer of thankfulness for his escape from what was meant for certain death. Half a league further on, the country became more thickly wooded, until at length on the brow of the hill, around which the path wound, a chapel came in sight toward which some peasants were wending their way. The knight entered with his train and knelt on the bare earthen floor until the priest had received the holy elements, when he advanced and, kneeling at the foot of the altar steps, likewise received the Sacrament. "*Quid retribuam*" the priest had said. "What shall we render to the Lord for all He hath rendered unto us?" The knight lifted up his heart, which was already illuminated by divine grace—some fitting memorial must be his.

At the conclusion of the Mass the men at arms and the few peasants present withdrew, and the cure left the altar just as the knight advanced to meet him.

"*Mon Pere,*" he said, "I am the Seigneur de St. Denis, and as I came over the mountain pass this morning with my train the hand of an assassin was raised against me, and my life seemed saved only by a miracle. But thanks to the Adorable Name of Jesus, which I had just invoked, I escaped. Henceforth, reverend father, I wish to vow my life and my strong arm to the glory and service of God."

"It is well, my son," said the priest; "the blessed St. Denis, whose name you bear, will be your defender and protector, and make your name illustrious for France." As they stood there in the mystic morning light, the knight in his shining armor, his noble head bared and bent in reverence to the words of the priest, he might have stood for the impersonification of the Blessed St. Denis himself.

A few more words passed between them, and then the knight and his train resumed their journey down the valley to the city some leagues beyond; but on the spot where the arrows had whizzed close to his head there arose in a few years a noble castle, and hither the Seigneur de St. Denis brought his bride, and before long the laughter of happy children re-



sounded through its walls. Fortune smiled on the knight, but ever he kept before him his vow to give of his best to God and France.

So the years passed, and the St. Denis' grew in power and wealth, while preserving intact the heritage of faith bequeathed them by their illustrious founder. They became great in peace and war, and high in favor with the king. Indeed, a monarch of France once spent two nights under their roof, and the country folk for many years after proudly recounted to their children how for forty-eight hours the royal standard of France waved from the castle walls.

And thus it was that one generation succeeded another until the year of grace 1770, when the last of the house of St. Denis was born, and, instead of the expected heir, it was a girl. The title became extinct, and the last lord of St. Denis, who had died two months previously, was soon followed by his wife, leaving their child, with her vast estates and her wealth, to be brought up, in the troubled times France was entering on, by her great-aunt, a childless widow, known in the world as Madame la Comtesse de Vignon.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mere Angelique stood in her convent parlor looking out on the garden, and beyond to the river and valley and distant mountains. Dark against the

sky rose the castle of St. Denis, as impregnable as when it was built hundreds of years ago; but the country around had changed and become more thickly populated; the beautiful convent on the brow of a hill, built of stone and half covered with ivy and other vines, was also old in point of time, though compared to the castle it was young. For forty years Mere Angelique had looked out on the same scene, first as a novice, and later as choir-mistress, and finally as superior. All the familiar scenes, and all the changes of summer and winter, were known and dear to her. There across the valley were the cottages of the peasants who came almost daily to her for aid; in the convent garden were the children with some of the younger nuns; their merry voices penetrated the closed window, bringing a pang to the tender heart that knew and loved each one.

It was the summer of 1793, and France was in the throes of the revolution. Louis the King had been guillotined, and the flower of the French nobility were dead or dispersed. Some there were who remained in their unhappy country, chiefly those who lived far from Paris. Convents and castles were everywhere closed or pillaged; and that the castle and convent of St. Denis had hitherto been left undisturbed, was due in a large measure to the faithful-

ness of the retainers and peasants, who, treated by the lords of St. Denis with far more kindness than distinguished the nobles of the time, would have died for any of the family. Hence Mere Angelique had hitherto felt comparative tranquility; but this particular morning her heart was full of anxiety, word having reached her of an uprising of the peasants a few leagues from the convent. It was even said that a noble had been shot on his own estate. How long would it be, she wondered, that their own serfs would remain loyal? There came a soft tap on the door, and in answer to her "*Entrez*" the massive mahogany door opened, and a tall, slender, graceful figure advanced and knelt at her feet.

"Have you heard the news, *ma mere*," she said, "that there has been an uprising on the De Grenelle estate, and that the Comte de Grenelle has been shot and killed?"

"Yes, Gabrielle *chere*," answered the old nun, laying her hand gently for a moment on the girl's beautiful dark head. "God alone knows what will come to our unhappy country now."

"It is shameful," said the young girl, springing to her feet; "something must be done, *ma mere*; this tyranny must be overcome. What is going to become of France in the future?"

"There is nothing to do, *chere*", said the nun;

"older and wiser heads than yours have wrestled with the problem, and see no way out of it—now."

"Do you remember, mother," said the young girl, "the story you used to read us of King Clovis and St. Remy, when Clovis was so moved by the saint's recital of the Passion and death of Christ that he sprang from his throne and cried out: 'Had I been there with my brave Franks I would have avenged His wrongs.' Mother," and the young girl took a step forward, "we need some one to avenge the wrong done to God and France now."

"The times are changed, my child," said the nun; "our only weapon now is prayer."

To the young creature before her, pulsing in every fibre with glorious life, this was too tame.

"Prayer—yes," she answered, "but action too. Listen"—and she drew nearer and, bending low, almost whispered in the nun's ear,—"*Listen, ma mere*; what we need is not another Clovis. Something more sudden and decisive, some action that will strike at the root of this revolt and put an end to its leaders—that is needed now. Do you remember, *ma mere*," she continued, "another story you read us, of how Jael slew Sisera? It was righteous, you said."

Mere Angelique lifted her soft, faded brown eyes

to the young girl's face, and something she saw there arrested the words on her lips.

"And therefore," continued the clear, low, musical voice, every tone and vibration of which pierced the heart of the nun, who had been like her second mother—"and therefore, *ma mere*, it is I, Gabrielle de St. Denis, who will go to Paris and rid France of these tyrants who deny to us that freedom of action and of religion which kings and emperors thought it a privilege to grant."

She drew back, her bosom heaving, her eyes flashing, all the enthusiasm and determination of generations of warlike ancestors in her voice and mien.

The old nun rose to her feet more quickly than she had moved for years.

"My child," she said, "are you mad? do you realize what you are saying?"

"Do you realize, *ma mere*," was the answer, "that it is against you this tyranny is being exercised, as much as against me, though I would avenge it?"

Mere Angelique crossed the room and unlocked the doors of a carved cabinet that hung on the wall; then she turned to the young girl, in her eyes a strange exalted light.

"Look!" she said. "It was not against us that Jews and Romans worked their vengeance; but

against Him—the Crucified. Shall we bear less than He?"

The delicately carved head of the Christ stood out from its background of heavy, purple velvet. Gabrielle saw it all: the thorns pressing the brow, the bleeding hands and feet, the heart that bore the sin of the world, the lips that cried to heaven that His murderers might be forgiven. There He hung, the Christ in His weakness and His triumph; the young girl saw and understood, but she was not yet conquered.

"Would we have let that happen if we could have prevented it, mother?" she said; "and I, ah, *mon Dieu!* why should not I rid the world of these men—Danton, Marat, Robespierre—who outrage God's Holy Name?"

She threw back her beautiful head and raised one slender, shapely arm high in the air as if calling Heaven to witness this cruel wrong that stung her proud, loyal soul. So might Joan of Arc have looked when she led the armies of France to victory. The nun closed the cabinet, and advancing to the young girl took both her hands in hers.

"Gabrielle, *chère amie*," she said, "you must seek some one wiser than I to see this matter in its true light. Go to Father Andre and tell him what you have told me. Ah, *bon Dieu*," she continued, drop-

ping the girl's hands and clasping her own, "not by further bloodshed will France be regenerated; but by discipline and pain. We need the voice of one crying in the wilderness, one who will preach to the hearts of sinful men. The time is not yet, but the day will come when France will rise from her ashes, beautiful, glorious, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

She seemed not to see when Gabrielle courtesied and left the room. Softly the nun passed into the chapel beyond and fell on her knees in her stall. Long and earnestly she prayed for herself, her nuns, for France.

"*A moi le travail*," she said. "*A moi le travail, l'humiliation, si Notre Seigneur m'en juge digne. A Dieu seul la gloire.*"

Gradually the twilight descended, and all was darkness, save where the red light burned in the sanctuary. In the heart of Mere Angelique, in spite of uncertainty, was that peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Eugene, *chere ami*, listen to me."

The speaker stood in a deep oriel window, framed in a background of rich red damask curtains, that brought into relief the raven blackness of her hair and the delicate ivory fairness of her skin. Clad from head to foot in white, Gabrielle de St. Denis

was in her own drawing-room; before her one of the handsomest and most chivalrous men in France. It mattered little to her just then that he had been pleading for her hand and for her; other and more weighty matters occupied her mind.

Owing to the troubled state of the times the young heiress of St. Denis had grown up with more freedom and less formality than was usual in a French demoiselle. Hence the young Vicomte de Morlet, whose estate adjoined hers, and who had been her friend and companion from childhood, had dined with her that night, and now Madame de Vignon having fallen asleep in her chair, her ward and the vicomte had passed into the drawing-room, and were ensconced in the deep oriel window that looked out over the ravine. Tradition had it that this window covered the very spot where the first lord of St. Denis had narrowly missed death from the archer's shaft. The interior of the castle had been improved and furnished by succeeding members of the family, without destroying its dignity or architectural beauty, until it was now one of the handsomest and most luxurious of the old residences of France. The title had become extinct; but the money and lands descended to the young girl, and to her heirs, if she had any.

Love, money, lands, youth, and beauty, were, however, far from Gabrielle de St. Denis that night.



Her whole being was wrought up to a passionate protest against the weight of tyranny and uncertainty under which France groaned.

"Listen, *mon ami*," she said; "this is not a time for us to think of marrying and giving in marriage; our country is in the throes of mortal agony, and *le bon Dieu* alone knows what the outcome will be. Rouse yourself, Eugene, and think—think of something besides me."

"How can I?" he said.

She made a gesture of superb scorn.

"Oh you men!" she cried; "you think of nothing but love till you have won, and then—you forget."

"Ah, *est-ce possible?*" he answered, with a smile in his dark eyes; and then he straightened up.

"Gabrielle *chere*," he said, "you think me indifferent, but I am not so; gladly would I bring back to France her Catholic kings and her Catholic faith, but as yet nothing can be done; we nobles who have so far escaped the guillotine are bound hand and foot. Any day our castles may be seized, and our own lives pay the forfeit. It is only so far by the faithfulness of our retainers and the mercy of God that we have remained unmolested. Ah Gabrielle, *mon coeur!*" he continued, as she did not speak, "not a day passes that the motto of the De Morlets does not ring in my ears: '*Je fais fort, et je falaise*'—I

make me strong and I persevere. We Catholic men of France must gird up our loins; for the time will come when our country will need her best and noblest sons."

She was weeping now—this girl with her passionate love and loyalty for her faith and her *belle patrie*. Of such is the real France—the France of St. Remy, of St. Louis, of Fenelon; of a long line of saints and kings and illustrious men, whose glorious light can never grow dim.

Swayed by different emotions Gabrielle thought one moment that she would unfold to the vicomte her plan to go to Paris with the avowed purpose of slaying the man who then ruled France; but on second thoughts she decided to keep it a secret. Well she knew that to tell Eugene her intentions would be to have them all frustrated. She must act quickly, she thought, and secretly—ere it be too late. Of herself she thought nothing. What man or woman with a like purpose ever does. She might escape, or her own life might pay the forfeit; in her present tense, exalted state it mattered little.

Meanwhile, here was a man who, in spite of republics or empires, must be dealt with—one who demanded and deserved an answer; so she turned to the young vicomte, who stood now beneath a shaded crystal lamp lit by wax candles, all the light

radiating on his handsome, refined face and figure.

"*Eugene cher*," she said, "you deserve an answer, and you shall have it. I do not say no, yet for the present I cannot say yes. The thought of all the suffering hearts in our beloved *patrie*, and the exiles near and far, would haunt me. When I know that the pain is less, or, *Dieu* willing, happily over, then"—she drew near him as she spoke, all the subtle fascination of her eyes, her smile, her low, thrilling voice, in the words—"then, Eugene, I will marry you."

Like a chevalier of old the vicomte fell on one knee before her; some instinct told him that in her present mood the young girl would not tolerate any deeper expression of his devotion and joy.

\* \* \* \* \*

Even had Gabrielle wished to follow Mere Angeli-que's advice and consult Father Andre, she was at present unacquainted with his whereabouts. The year 1793 was not one when a priest could openly stay at his post and say Mass in France.

Mere Angelique and her nuns had remained in their convent up to the present time, with a few of the children (many of them orphaned by the Revolution) in their care. But Mass was said secretly, and only at intervals when the devoted priest could come to them.

Hence Gabrielle determined to undertake her difficult journey unknown to any one except her

maid Jeanne, who had been her *bonne*, and had lived with her since her childhood. Jeanne's father and mother had a little shop in an obscure by-street in Paris, and the young girl decided to go to them, unaccompanied save by the faithful maid. Disguised as a peasant, she thought she could travel unobserved and unmolested. Of the discomforts of the journey, that would occupy ten days or two weeks, and must be made by diligence, she thought little. Gabrielle unfolded to Jeanne part of her plans. She must go to Paris on important business, unknown to her aunt, and secretly; would *Monsieur le Pere* take her in? Jeanne was sure he would. The times were full of trouble; but her parents, thank God! had kept their little shop unmolested. Mademoiselle would be safe there, and could stay as long as she wished.

So one dark night mistress and maid, disguised like peasants, and carrying each a small bundle, took the evening diligence that left the village every three or four weeks for Paris. They were the only passengers at the start, but some leagues beyond a stout country girl with a fresh, pleasant face and later four men and a woman and child, were added to their party. For the rest of the night the occupants of the coach slept more or less well; but at day-break they stopped at an inn, and in an hour were off again with fresh horses.

Gabrielle was disinclined for conversation; but she realized that it would be safer to talk and keep up as far as possible the *role* she had assumed. Addressing the rosy-faced country girl she asked her if she had far to go. "To Paris," was the answer; and one of the men inquired, with an attempt at joviality, if she was going to see Marie Antoinette.

"Ah, the poor queen!" said his companion, who did not seem to mind airing his political opinions, "it was a bad day for her when she failed to escape from France; and now she is locked up in the *Conciergerie*."

"What will you, *mon frere*?" said the third man, who had not yet spoken; "the country has no more need of kings and queens, and there are but two alternatives—the guillotine or the prison. For myself, give me freedom and Robespierre."

The country girl's eyes flashed. "What say you, monsieur?" she queried, leaning forward. "You think France is prospering under those tyrants in Paris. Better the rule of the king, with law and order, than the bloodshed and violence that now run riot over our *patrie*."

"*Mais petite*," said the man who had first spoken, "talk not so loud or that pretty head of yours may yet roll off the guillotine."

It seemed to Gabrielle as if the journey were end-

less—day succeeded day, with an occasional night in some wayside inn. She wondered if her aunt and the vicomte would make any effort to find her, and whether she would indeed ever see them again.

On the tenth day of their journey they were nearing Paris, and about noon they stopped to water the horses and let the passengers get something to eat. Their fare *en route* had been meagre; but Gabrielle's strong young body had so far resisted all hardships.

She was standing in the courtyard of the inn when the rosy-faced country girl, who had so plainly shown her sympathies for the unhappy Bourbons, drew near. Gabrielle was struck by her handsome appearance and look of intelligence.

"We are nearing Paris, and will soon have to part, mademoiselle," she said.

The country girl flashed a keen glance at her, and Gabrielle bit her lip, remembering that "mademoiselle" was hardly a form of address used between two supposed peasants.

"It is a sad world, *mon amie*," was the answer, "meetings and partings, and always the duty beyond. I myself have left my home for ever, and Paris is an unknown country."

The words chimed in so well with Gabrielle's own mood that she moved nearer to her companion with kindly sympathy.

"Have you only just left your home?" she asked.

"No, mademoiselle," was the answer. "I am from Caen, and have been in Paris for a month until a week ago, when duty called me in your direction for a time. I am returning to Paris and an unknown future now."

"I too have an unknown future before me," said Gabrielle, "and Paris this unhappy year is full of dangers; but, like you, duty has called me there."

"*Attendez, demoiselles,*" called the guard; "time passes and we must reach Paris to-night."

The two girls hurried to the coach, and no further private conversation could take place between them; but about nine o'clock that night they drove into Paris and the diligence drew up at the hostelry on the banks of the Seine. The *maitre d'hotel* came out with a rushlight and held it aloft while the passengers dismounted.

"It is not far from here to my father's shop," said Jeanne, "and we can walk there in half an hour."

Gabrielle was both tired and stiff as she made her way in the courtyard of the hotel while Jeanne paid their fare. In the confusion attendant on their arrival she found herself near the country girl, and took the opportunity to say farewell. "I trust we may meet again," she said pleasantly, "and that better days will yet dawn for France;" and then,

with her most engaging smile, she added: "Won't you tell me your name before we part? Mine is Gabrielle de St. Denis."

"Ah, mademoiselle," whispered the other, "you are no more a peasant than I am. I divined it this morning. God knows what the future holds for France; but if she is ever delivered from her present bondage, think of me and remember my name as Charlotte Corday."

She was gone after an instant's strong clasp of the hand, leaving Gabrielle to wonder, as she followed Jeanne down the dark, uneven street, who she could be, and what her mission in Paris was.

Gabrielle remained two days in the little room above the shop that Jeanne's parents made ready for her. On the third day she determined to start out on her mission, having so arranged matters that Jeanne and her mother were both out when Gabrielle herself slipped out of the front door, unobserved by the Citoyen Flavel, who was smoking a pipe and dozing in the rear of his shop. Desiring to attract as little attention as possible, she was clad in black, with a light veil partly concealing her face. In the folds of her dress she carried a loaded pistol that had been her father's.

On starting out she decided to take a short walk before proceeding to her destination, for, while not



lacking in courage, she began to feel the strain of her present position, and she knew that her hand must be firm and her aim sure if she would succeed. Traversing several squares, she turned into an almost deserted by-street; the sound of carriage wheels at the same time turning out of the main thoroughfare smote on her ear.

"We arrest you, mademoiselle," said a low voice, "for conspiring against the government."

A shock of surprise, and a sickening feeling of failure came over Gabrielle.

"I am sorry, mademoiselle," said the gendarme, "but I must ask you to step in this carriage," holding open the door as he spoke.

To resist would be to have a scene, and the man had spoken far more respectfully than was to be expected; so quietly, and without having uttered a word, Gabrielle stepped in the waiting coupe, shrinking back in one corner when the gendarme, as in duty bound, took the vacant seat beside her. They were driven rapidly to a small prison in the eastern part of Paris, and half an hour later Gabrielle found herself locked up in a cell at the end of a long stone corridor, alone, all her plans a failure; and with her aunt and the Vicomte de Morlet totally ignorant of her present state.

It chanced that Jeanne suspected more than her

mistress thought. What was on foot she did not know; but there was a mystery, and she, Jeanne, must fathom it. Hence while she had seemed to start out on the errand on which her mistress had sent her, she had in reality followed Gabrielle, had witnessed her arrest, and comprehended that here was serious trouble. She was hurrying home to consult her father and mother, when a turn in the street brought her face to face with the Vicomte de Morlet and Amedee, an old and faithful retainer of the St. Denis family. Jeanne knew them instantly, though both men were dressed as mechanics. She exclaimed, and then checked herself.

"Come with me, monsieur," she said in a low voice, "and I will explain all about mademoiselle; but we must be quick."

Fifteen minutes' walking brought them to the little shop, and in ten minutes De Morlet had heard all there was to tell.

Discovering Gabrielle's flight early the day after her departure, the Vicomte, summoned by the Comtesse de Vignon and further enlightened by Mere Angelique, had realized fully all that the young girl was about to do and dare; and at great risk to himself he had followed her to Paris as rapidly as possible, accompanied by Amedee and the Comtesse. Had it not been that immediate action was necessary,

the girl's recklessness and daring would have appaled him. To get her out of prison and then, if possible, to get her, the comtesse, and himself out of France as speedily as possible, was the plan he decided on.

Meanwhile, in the three days' solitude that had been her portion, seeing no one but the *geolier* who brought her meals, Gabrielle had begun to see matters in their true light. Lying face downward on her narrow iron cot, the young girl thought of Mere Angelique, of the noble forgiveness and charity that animated the old nun in the face of constant peril and uncertainty.

"Ah, *ma mere!*" thought Gabrielle, "you were right; and I in my pride could not see it. It was murder I had in my heart, and I thought it a high and exalted love for France. Forgive me, *mon Dieu,*" she prayed, "forgive me, and assist me to bear with courage whatever comes."

Her abasement was complete; but there still lingered in her breast the courage of a true St. Denis, bidding her bear all things while acknowledging her defeat.

Who had become cognizant of her plans and betrayed her? she wondered. She had said nothing on her ten days' journey to Paris that could incriminate her. Was it possible that any one of alien

sympathies could have overheard her conversation with Mere Angelique?

On the fourth day after her capture the door of her cell opened to admit the *geolier*.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "a priest wishes to see you; you will be given ten minutes to converse with him; at the end of that time he must go."

The young girl arose. She more than suspected that the man was not a priest, but some one sent in that garb to try and extort a confession from her, knowing well that at that time no real priest would be granted free access to a penitent, or be able to walk about Paris unmolested. She would be very sure, she thought, before she unburdened her heart, as she longed to do.

As a matter of fact the *geolier* himself had been deceived into believing that it was a sham priest, sent by the government to find out the prisoner's plot; so he stood aside to give entrance to a tall, dignified looking man with white hair, and wearing spectacles.

"*Benedictus qui venit in Nomine Domini*," he said, making the sign of the cross over the young girl as he entered. Then, placing the only chair that the cell afforded alongside the small wooden table that stood by Gabrielle's bed, he motioned to her to kneel down, the while he seated himself in the chair.

"*In Nomine Patris*," he said in a loud voice, just as the door closed after the *geolier* with a resounding clang; then in a low voice he continued:

"My daughter, time is short and I must talk to you; do not start or exclaim at anything I may say;" and then in a still lower tone, and in his natural voice, he added "*Gabrielle!*"

It was De Morlet! By a supreme effort of self-control Gabrielle neither turned her head nor moved, as her lover continued rapidly:

"Listen, and give no sign, for the very walls may have eyes. The *geolier* thinks I am a spy sent by the government. I have bribed his wife by giving her an enormous *geolage* and promising her another as soon as you are free. To-morrow at nine they expect to bring you before the authorities; and if your plans are discovered it will surely lead to the guillotine. But have courage! At five the woman will come to you. You are to put on the clothes she brings, and then walk down this corridor, turn to your left, and go out of the prison door. You will have a basket on your arm as if you were going to market, and I shall be waiting for you in the costume of a mechanic; you must follow me at a distance until I join you. Do you understand?"

"Yes," answered Gabrielle in a low voice.

"Above all," continued De Morlet, "have no fear;

everything depends on your being brave and collected. Once outside the prison, walk slowly; and don't seem to notice me."

Then he arose as the *geolier* turned the key in the door.

"Time is up, *mon pere*," he said, with a malicious look at the young girl who stood with clasped hands and downcast eyes. No doubt she had confessed all!

"*Dominus vobiscum*," said De Morlet; and then replacing his hat on his head, and gathering his long cloak around him, he turned and left the cell, the door of which was closed and locked by the *geolier*.

Gabrielle flew to the door; but no sound reached her. Would he succeed?—he **who** had risked so much for her, and whom she now knew was so inexpressibly dear. The young girl fell on her knees by the small iron bed in an agony of suspense and prayer.

"*Oh! Marie, refuge des pecheurs*, pray for him," she said.

. . . . .

"We must be quick, mademoiselle," said the *geoliere*: "At this hour the place is almost deserted, and I think you will not encounter any one; but if you do, bend your head and hurry by."

She began to dress the young girl rapidly as she spoke.

"But you, madame," said Gabrielle,—“you will suffer for me.”

The woman threw back her head and laughed:

“Not I,” she said. “I have a duplicate of all the keys here. As soon as I know you are outside I shall get out of here myself and hurry back to my rooms; then I will burn your clothes. *Voilà!* They will find the bird flown when they come for you, and no one they can lay hold of who has done the deed! My husband, stupid fellow, knows nothing.” She began to hum a French ditty as she spoke, with superb unconcern, the while her deft fingers rapidly dressed Gabrielle in her clothes. In another moment this second Defarge opened the door, and listening intently for a moment, nodded.

“My husband is asleep,” she said, “and at this time I always go to the market, so he wont miss me when he awakes. He always goes to the upper corridor first, and while he is there I will slip back to our rooms. Courage, mademoiselle,” she added, as she gave a final pull to Gabrielle’s shawl.

It seemed an eternity to the young girl before she safely reached the street. A rapid glance showed her De Morlet on the opposite side of the way, dressed as he had said he would be, like a mechanic. He began walking slowly along the Rue—, on which the prison stood; then turning north, he quickened

his pace a little. Not once did he look back; and Gabrielle followed, trembling so at first that she could hardly control herself. A few work-people and peasants from the suburbs, as well as some women on their way to market, passed by; but she noticed with relief that no one seemed to observe her. Her courage rose as they got further and further from the prison. The occasional noise of a passing cart, and the cries of the street hawkers, served to take some of the strain from her nerves.

A stout country-woman passed her with a heavy basket poised lightly on her head.

"*'Fraises, oh les belles fraises,'*" she sang; "*'c, rises a la douce,' chasselas de Fontainebleau.'*"

"*Po-ois verts,*" called out a passing hawker.

"*Po-ois verts, 'v' la d't artichauts, de beaux a artichauts'.*"

It was a long walk, when at last, with a sigh of relief, Gabrielle saw De Morlet pause, turn around, and as if satisfied that danger was past, come toward her. In a moment they were side by side, and in a second a closed caleche drove up, on the box seat the faithful Amedee, and within the conveyance was the Comtesse, very pale and almost unable to speak.

"We are safe, I think, *ma chere,*" said De Morlet; "but we must get out of France without loss of time. I have a passport which will, I think, take us safely



to the coast." He handed Gaorielle into the caleche, telling her to change her dress; and mounting the box by Amedee, they were soon out in the country, driving rapidly. At a place in the road where stood a clump of trees De Morlet dismounted and changed his own clothes; then rolling up his own and Gabrielle's discarded costumes, he hid them under heavy stones.

"Everything has been done so secretly," he said, "that no breath of it is abroad. If we are questioned *en route*, I am the Citoyen Deschamps, taking my father, mother, and sister to Havre, where we have a shop on the *quai*."

So skillfully had De Morlet managed everything, that if they were pursued they were not found, nor had they any trouble in reaching Havre. Twice their passport was examined by gendarmes; but so well did they all play their assumed *role* that they were not suspected.

In a week they reached Havre, and the morning after their arrival a courier brought the news of the assassination of Marat by Charlotte Corday. Remembering the name of her companion *en route* to Paris, Gabrielle was profoundly moved. How strange that they had been bent on the same mission, and that one had failed and the other succeeded!

To De Morlet, however, this intelligence presented

a fresh element of danger, for fear the government would think Gabrielle an accomplice of Corday's, and redouble their efforts to find her; so he lost no time in hurrying them all on board a waiting ship, nor did he breathe freely until the captain had weighed anchor, and they had turned their backs on France. It was a moonlight night in July, allowing Eugene and Gabrielle to stay on deck long after every one else had gone below. The fast vanishing shores of France stood out in the clear light of the moon—France, beautiful, glorious, and yet so unhappy, for whose highest good these two souls, so soon to be united, would seek to live when they should some day return to her shores. A shadow fell across the deck, sharply outlined in the brilliant light, and the next moment a tall, dark figure stood by their side.

"Peace, my children!" he said.

"Father Andre!" they both exclaimed, recognizing with joy the good old priest who had loved them and ministered to them all their lives.

But it was a solemn moment for the good cure, as for them, for he, at least, was leaving France for ever.

The garb of a priest covers but does not stifle the heart of a Frenchman, and that of Pere Andre was wrung with anguish for his afflicted *patrie*.

For half an hour the trio, each of whom in his own way had just passed through such peril and emotion, sat on deck and talked of France past and future, of the king and queen, of the heroic souls who had perished in the Revolution, and of their own marvelous escape, until finally it was time to go below for the night.

Gabrielle arose, and simultaneously they all three turned and faced the shore of France. By a common instinct the two men raised their hats, the while the priest made over his country the sign of the cross.

*"O mon Dieu!"* he said in French, and in a voice that again and again trembled and broke: *"O mon Dieu!* the Heathen are come into Thine inheritance, they have defiled Thy holy temple: they have made Jerusalem as a garner of fruit.

"Not here, O Lord," he said, "but elsewhere, Thy saints shall flourish like the lily, and be like the odor of balsam before Thee."

"They have poured out their blood like water round about Jerusalem . . . We are become a reproach to our neighbors; a scorn and derision unto them that are round about us. Remember not our iniquities; let Thy mercies speedily prevent us . . . Remember not our iniquities, but let Thy mercies speedily prevent us!"

## THE QUEST OF MAGDALENA.

## CHAPTER I.

"THE boy will never be well again," said the Doctor.

"You mean—" The agonized father paused, unable to voice his fears.

The Doctor nodded, and tapped his forehead significantly.

"The brain, my dear sir," he said, "the brain. Physically your son is as splendid a specimen of boyhood just emerging into manhood as I have ever seen; but the injury he has received is irreparable. He will never be any better than he is now."

"It is worse than I feared," said the other. "Are you quite sure that time, or, perhaps an operation, will not help him? Remember, Doctor, that the boy is my only son."

The great physician looked his compassion.

"My dear sir," he answered, "I feel absolutely sure that nothing can be done. The only consolation, if consolation it be, that I can offer you is that the boy will not suffer; nor will he grow any worse than he is now. What is left of the mind will be clear, but beyond that there is a blank. Old impressions have

been wiped out, and new ones will never be formed. Find out what interests him, and cultivate that interest as much as you can."

"You have done all you could, Doctor," was the answer, "but I need time to realize what it means, and to think of the best plan for my boy's future."

The two men, the one small, alert, keen of eye, with iron grey hair and moustache; the other tall, dark, and although nearing middle life, with hair still black, and features showing his Spanish origin, stood in front of the wide gallery that encircled the hacienda up on the hill. For these were the broad ranch lands of the Senor de Torres—the richest ranchero for miles around.

Cordially they shook hands, as a Mexican boy held open the door of the waiting carriage.

The Doctor stepped in, the door was closed, and in another moment the handsome horses were trotting down the broad driveway that led for a mile from the house to the ranch gate. In another hour Doctor Amend, comfortably settled in a fast express train, was whirling southward toward the city, leaving far behind him the lovely mountain country in the north, to which he had been summoned by the Senor de Torres after the accident to his only son.

\* \* \* \* \*

And so it was that I, Santos, was sent for by my master whose beautiful lands stretched for miles over hill and valley, to come and act as attendant to his son, Don Arturo.

Leaving my little adobe near the river's bank, I moved up to the great hacienda, and was given a room next to my young master.

"I place him absolutely in your care, Santos," the senor said. "Guard him well, and make him as happy as you can. Try and find out what he would like to do, and if there is anything that will interest him, let me know."

I promised to do all I could, for well I loved Don Arturo. Had we not played together as children; hunted and fished, and ridden for miles on our stout little bronchos when we were older. It was he who was everywhere the leader, though all he knew of outdoor sport he had learned from me, and, indeed, he was a worthy pupil. Who else among the sons of the surrounding rancheros could run and jump and throw a lasso, and chase a flying broncho, leaping on its back as it fled over the ground, like Don Arturo? I see him now, as he was then, his tall, well-built, graceful figure, and the fair head, blue eyes, and regular aquiline features that he inherited from the late senora, his English mother. Truly sometimes he had seemed to me like a young god.

And now, alas! it was all over; at nineteen had come the great change.

Out riding one day with some of his friends, his horse had taken fright and bolted. They were just at the top of a long, steep hill, and in spite of his splendid horsemanship, Don Arturo was thrown, striking his head as he fell. He was picked up insensible and carried home by his companions, on an improvised litter, and that was the end of the future that the Senor de Torres had planned for him.

I set to work obediently to try and find out what would interest my young master. Would he ride? Yes, but not with any of his old spirit and zest. It was the same with fishing, with our walks over the mountain trails, and the games he used to love. He was docile, gentle and obedient, but the old spirit and fire, the keen interest in all he used to do, was gone. Alas! Alas!

Yes, I am not ashamed to say I was often near to weeping. He talked so little, the poor young senor, and yet there was nothing repellant in his affliction. Rather, it seemed to me that, instead of the mind being distorted, a portion of it had gone to sleep. His movements lacked buoyancy; but he walked, ate, and spoke, when he did speak, in a perfectly normal manner. The chief sign of his affliction was that he did not often answer when spoken to, but this seemed

to me to be because the appeal was made to that portion of his brain which, as the doctor said, had been wiped out.

Was there, then, no part of that once beautiful mind that remained uninjured—some interest that we had not yet been able to reach? Ah! Yes, thank God, there was, and the blessed saints pointed the way through the young senorita, Don Arturo's only sister, Magdalena.

She was eighteen when the accident to the young senor occurred, and ah! beautiful, beautiful. Dark like her father, the Senor de Torres, and wilful and yet full of bewitching sweetness. After the death of her mother she had grown up with little restraint, idolized by both father and brother—the belle of the whole broad Texas country for miles and miles in every direction. Passionately devoted to her brother, his affliction was a crushing blow to her, and for some time she seemed unable to stay near him. It was not lack of love; but the change in him, who had been her constant companion, was too great a pain. And so the young master was left almost wholly to me, who loved him, until the day came when we found the key to that poor, bruised intellect.

It was a warm morning early in May. Don Arturo and I had walked out to an abandoned quarry, our



arms laden with flowers, to deck the shrine of the Blessed Mother that some good priest had erected in the early days of the Texas missions. Tired with our walk, we were lying stretched out on the smooth, warm stone, our soft felt sombreros bent together for a pillow, when I saw coming toward us, a book in one hand, a garland of flowers in the other, the young Senorita Magdalena. Lightly she tripped toward us, jumping over crevices in the stone, skirting around huge boulders, until finally she reached the shrine, her dark eyes shining, her brown hair lifted from her low, broad forehead by the soft breeze that blew from the south.

"What a heavenly morning," she said. "Look, Arturo, I have brought a wreath to crown the blessed Madre. Won't you put it on for me? You are tall, and can do it better than I can."

The young senor did not move or answer, only looked at his sister with his blue eyes, in which there seemed to linger some unknown spiritual depths. It may seem strange; but there was nothing vacant in his gaze.

A shadow passed over the senorita's face, and she turned to me.

"You do it, Santos," she said. So it was I who placed the wreath on the head of the Blessed Madre; and that done, the young girl sat down near us, and

opened her book. Glancing at her brother, she hesitated and looked beyond him at me. I seemed to divine her unspoken question, and nodded. In the old days the two had often read aloud to each other. Without any further hesitation she returned to her book, and I stretched out on the stone again, shading my eyes from the sun, and drinking in the rich, liquid tones of her voice, as she read aloud the beautiful verse. I knew the subject well—it was the knight, Percivale, talking to Brother Ambrose, and telling him of the Holy Grail.

“Ah, Christ, that it would come,  
 And heal the world of all their wickedness!  
 ‘O Father,’ asked the maiden, ‘might it come  
 To me by prayer and fasting?’ ‘Nay,’ said he,  
 ‘I know not, for thy heart is pure as snow.’  
 And so she prayed and fasted, till the sun  
 Shone, and the wind blew through her, and I  
     thought  
 She might have risen and floated when I saw her.”

What was it in the verse that had attracted Don Arturo? He was sitting up now, listening with rapt, intent look as his sister read on.

“For on a day she sent to speak with me,  
 And when she came to speak, behold her eyes  
 Beyond all knowing of them, beautiful,  
 Beyond all knowing of them wonderful,

Beautiful in the light of holiness.  
And 'Oh, my brother Percivale,' she said,  
'Sweet brother, I have seen the Holy Grail;  
For, waked at dead of night, I heard a sound  
As of a silver horn from o'er the hills  
Blown, and I thought, 'It is not Arthur's use  
To hunt by moonlight;' and the slender sound  
As from a distance beyond distance grew  
Coming upon me—O never harp nor horn,  
Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch with  
hand,  
Was like that music as it came; and then  
Stream'd thro' my cell a cold and silver beam,  
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail,  
• Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive,  
Till all the white walls of my cell were dyed  
With rosy colors leaping on the wall;  
And then the music faded, and the Grail  
Pass'd, and the beam decay'd, and from the walls  
The rosy quiverings died into the night.  
So now the Holy Thing is here again  
Among us, brother; fast thou, too, and pray.  
And tell thy brother knights to fast and pray,  
That so perchance the vision may be seen  
By thee and those, and all the world be heal'd.' "

Don Arturo had risen and moved toward his sister;  
something in his actions made her pause and close  
the book.

"Magdalena," he said, "we must find it, the Holy  
Grail."

It was the first time he had spoken her name since his accident, and the longest sentence we had heard him give voice to in the weeks since he had left his sick room. The young senorita flushed and paled.

"Arturo," she asked, "why do you want to find the Holy Grail?"

The boy knelt down by his sister and laid one hand on the book.

"You read what it said, Magdalena," he answered. "The world will be healed, no more sorrow—and—" he passed his hand over his forehead for a moment, as if his mind was struggling toward some light—"no more pain."

The young senorita twined both arms around his neck, and bent her beautiful dark head close to his fair one.

"Indeed we will look for it, Arturo," she said. "Thou and I."

"Somewhere over the hills," said the boy, "we will hear it—the silver horn; then we will know, Magdalena."

His expression was animated, his eyes sparkled. Yes, at last the key to that dormant intellect had been found. When the Senor de Torres heard of what had taken place at the Blessed Madre's shrine, he gave orders that everything must be done to encourage this dawning interest, and he himself sent

to the city for a book of the beautiful poems that Don Arturo loved.

As to the ranch people—Mexicans, Indians and half-breeds, but Catholics all of them—they declared it was a miracle worked at the shrine of the Madre Santisima.

“Read to him as much as he wants, Santos,” the senior said. “Talk to him about it. It may be the beginning of renewed intelligence.”

Thanks to the good Franciscan Fathers, whose school I had attended, I could read very well, and after that we spent long hours outdoors, or up in the mountains, or else on the wide gallery that encircled the hacienda, while I read of King Arthur and his knights, page on page of Lancelot and Percivale, of Sir Galahad and Elaine; but always the boy loved best to hear of the Holy Grail. And so passed more than a year, and it was June, and the ranch garden glowed with the deep crimson roses which Donna Magdalena daily gathered with her own hands for the shrine of the Sacred Heart in our little oratory; and then it was that something happened which I could not have dreamed of.

## CHAPTER II.

Don Arturo and I had started for a walk in the early morning, our destination being an abandoned

mission, high up among the hills. For some reason the young master liked to go there, and have me read to him as we sat in the shade cast by the stone wall of the old church, which now was rapidly falling into ruins. The site commanded a magnificent view, chiefly southward, where the silvery Guadalupe threaded its way through the valley, while the broad, fertile lands of the different rancheros stretched as far as the eye could reach—some on the lowlands, some crowning the hills, that formed a beautiful chain until they were lost to sight in the misty blue of the far distance.

We could see herds of cattle grazing on the plains, Mexicans driving stout burros attached to their canvas-covered carts, with just a glimpse of the little railroad station, which was almost hid from view behind some trees. The scene interested me always, but I wondered what it was that attracted Don Arturo. That morning, however, I found out.

"Santos," he said, "I think if we came here by moonlight we would see Arthur coming over the hills with all his knights, and surely, then, we would find the Holy Grail."

"And what would you do, if you found it?" I asked.

He did not answer immediately, but passed his hand across his brow with that little gesture we had

all learned to know, showing that his mind was struggling toward some light that the question called forth.

"I think," he said slowly, "if we found it—the Holy Grail—it would be something so wonderful that all the world would grow better—and—so—"

"And what then?" I asked, to help him.

"And so," said the boy, giving one of his rare and brilliant smiles—"and so, Santos, only one place in the world would be worthy to guard it. It would have to be sent to Rome, and be placed in the care of our holy Father."

I was amazed, indeed, at the young master's train of thought. Might it not be that, in spite of what the great doctor said, his mind, little by little, would come back until he was himself again?

"Read to me, Santos," he said, "about the 'long beam.' " And I read:

" 'Down the long beam stole the Holy Grail,  
Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive,  
Till all the white walls of my cell were dyed  
With rosy colors leaping on the wall. "

"And what do they say the Holy Grail really is, Santos?"

I repeated again; for he loved to have me tell him, the story of that "phantom cup that comes and goes," that it was no other than the holy cup, or

chalice, used by our Lord at the Last Supper; and which, filled with the Precious Blood, was brought to Glastonbury by Joseph of Arimathea. Here it was kept for many a year until it unaccountably disappeared; and it was to try and find it that Arthur and his knights went on their quest.

"Perhaps it is because the world has grown cold in faith," I proceeded, "that it has never been found. Only someone very pure in heart can ever discover it again—someone with a faith and devotion like Joseph of Arimathea, for the story runs that no one so pure as to be worthy to look on it has ever yet started on the quest."

"I know who could find it," said the boy. "Magdalena. She is pure and good, Santos."

How he loved her, the young master! but of the two I thought him the most likely to find the Holy Grail. There was not an evil thought in his mind, and no sign of passion or impatience ever disturbed his serenity.

"Do you ever dream, Santos?" he asked next. "The other night I dreamed I heard someone sing very low:

"'Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive.'"

"And I asked, 'What does that mean?' for I was puzzled; and the same voice answered:



“ ‘It means the Heart—the Adorable Heart of Jesus’, and just then I woke up. And so, Santos, I think, perhaps, the Precious Blood is not all that is meant by the Holy Grail. It is the Heart of Jesus seeking through the world, and never finding, one who will love Him as perfectly as He loves us.”

Under my breath I whispered, “Wonderful, wonderful.”

The young senor, however, did not hear me—he was gazing out toward the hills, a rapt expression on his face. Presently he arose; and glancing at the sun, I, too, got up and prepared to leave. We had lingered longer than usual, and I feared the walk would be too hot before we got back to the ranch.

We started along the trail down the mountain; but it was nine o'clock when we reached the cool, shady canyon. A short walk of ten minutes would bring us out on the other side, beyond which we would have a walk of half a mile before reaching home. Don Arturo was tired, and as we entered the canyon an inspiration seized me. Why not rest and take a *siesta* before proceeding on our way?

“Yes,” Don Arturo said, and in five minutes he was asleep, stretched out on a mossy boulder, under the shade of a fine old tree. I, who was tired, but not sleepy, lay down near him and gave myself up to that luxury of repose which we Mexicans love.

Ah! and then it was that the thing happened which filled me with grief and perplexity. I had been lying under the tree perhaps ten minutes when I heard footsteps and voices. I glanced at Don Arturo. He was in a profound sleep—such a sleep as is usually known only to childhood, or to the perfectly untroubled in mind. Satisfied that he would not awake, I rolled softly to the edge of the cliff, where we were, and glanced down to where, fifteen feet below, a road, now seldom used and nearly overgrown by grass, led through the canyon.

Coming toward me through the trees, now in shadow, now in the light of the sun, as they walked, I beheld Donna Magdalena, and with her a tall, dark, handsome man, whom I instantly recognized. It was the Senor Carlos Durand, a rich young ranchero who lived twelve miles from our own ranch. Where had the senorita met him? For I knew that my master, the Senor de Torres did not admit him as a visitor to his house. Evil stories were afloat about this young man. He lived alone on his ranch. His father, who was a French immigrant, and his mother, who was a native—half Spanish, half Mexican—being dead. There were stories of wild orgies at the ranch, and more than once, Padre Paul had driven out there to remonstrate with the young senor, who, nominally at least, was one of his flock.

The two who were now walking through the canyon, drew near, and presently sat down on the trunk of a fallen tree, just below where I lay, and facing me.

"It is all very simple," Don Carlos said. "I will be south of this canyon with horses, whence we can drive to B—and take the express that stops there at four in the morning. We will reach the city at seven, can breakfast, and then go immediately and get married. Once it is done, your father will forgive us, and receive us back."

"I do not like it," said the senorita. "Come to the house openly, Carlos, and ask my father for me. He will hardly refuse my petition joined to yours."

"You do not know," was the answer. "If he will not receive me as a guest, will he accept me as a son-in-law?"

And then he added what he thought a master stroke.

"You are afraid, Magdalena. I thought you did not know what that meant."

The senorita flashed a look at him from her dark eyes, and threw back her head proudly.

"Fear!" she said. "You know it is not that, Carlos. It is the hurt to my father—to Arturo. You must remember how I love them."

"Yes," he said. "And what of me?"

"Ah!" and she wrung her hands. "I am indeed between two fires."

And then he redoubled his pleading, the wretch, telling her they should leave all for each other—such was the Divine law; and in the end he prevailed. She consented to fly with him that night. She, Donna Magdalena, whom her brother thought worthy to find the Holy Grail!

In about half an hour, they arose and walked back the way they came, and presently, with my ear close to the ground, I heard the sound of horses' hoofs growing fainter and fainter in the distance, and knew they were riding homeward. Probably they were returning separately, as I felt sure they would not be seen riding together.

I awoke Don Arturo, and we were soon on our way to the ranch. I had a fixed purpose. I would see my master, and tell him all I had heard. This proposed runaway must be stopped at all costs.

Alas! when I reached the hacienda it was to find my master had gone to the city for two days. In despair I called Jose, and bidding him stay with the young senor till I got back, I set off, running at full speed for the abode of our good *parroco*, Padre Paul.

Reaching there, hot and breathless, I was met by his Mexican cook, Thomassie—his mother, the sweet Senora Wentworth having died a year ago. The

Padre was out, Thomassie said. He had received a sick call to a parishioner who lived up in the mountains. He might be back in an hour or two, or it might be longer. Leaving a note for the Padre, urging him to come and see me as soon as he returned, I started for home, heavy of heart. I had done all I could, and there was nothing now but to wait.

### CHAPTER III.

"Santos, Santos, wake up."

It was the young senor's voice, and struggling out of a heavy sleep, I found him standing by me in the gloom that was not lightened by either moon or stars. He was fully dressed.

The night was absolutely dark, and had been so since eleven o'clock, when I had gone to my room next Don Arturo's, and sitting down by my window, had prepared for an all-night watch, if need be. Up to the last, before retiring, I had hoped that Padre Paul would come; but he neither came nor sent any word, so I knew he had not yet returned from his visit to the mountains.

An hour passed, two hours. I could hear the deep, regular breathing of Don Arturo in the next room; but no other sound broke the stillness of the dark, starless night. Sleep must have descended on

me as suddenly as night descends in the tropics, for I was not even conscious of feeling drowsy before yielding to slumber. I had slept an hour when awakened by the young senor calling my name.

"What is it, Don Arturo?" I asked, and even as I spoke, far out among the hills I heard the faint, silvery sound of a horn. "Santos," said the boy, "do you hear that? I have heard it twice. It is the Holy Grail, and we must go ere it passes away."

He was walking out of the room as he spoke, and I hurried after him as rapidly as possible.

Fast as I walked and almost ran, I was far behind the young senor, who sped over the fields as if his feet had wings.

Again the silver horn sounded. Was it indeed King Arthur who was passing that night in his ever new, ever old quest for the Holy Grail?

The moon, which had been obscured, was suddenly visible, as the heavy clouds overhead parted for a moment. A broad path of light shone over the hills and—yes! I was sure I saw on the brow of the nearest hill the dark figure of a horseman, enveloped in a heavy cloak.

I broke into a run, and reached Don Arturo, just as the clouds once more rolled over the moon. He, too, had seen that solitary figure. I felt him tremble from head to foot as I laid my hand on his arm.

Thus linked, we sped on until we reached the ranch gate, and now we were running along the road leading to the canyon. Beyond that was the hill which I knew was our goal.

I am a good runner, but I was breathless as we neared the canyon. As to Don Arturo, he seemed a winged mercury, so fast he ran, so swift and tireless, sound of heart and lung. I knew the love, deep in his heart, that spurred him on. A turn in the road and another rift in the clouds showed us the canyon, and there, walking rapidly over its grassy road, was a tall figure, enveloped in a long, dark cloak, the hood of which was drawn well over the head.

For a moment my bewildered fancy saw visions of dead monks walking abroad at night. Perchance this was the ghost of some Franciscan friar bent on an errand of mercy. I looked again, and then my brain cleared, and in a flash I knew who it was—thanks to God and the blessed saints who had brought us here! The horn sounded once more, sharp and short this time, as if the one who blew it was getting impatient. Involuntarily our steps quickened. The dark figure ahead must have heard us, for we were gaining every moment.

There was a moment's hesitation as we drew near; then suddenly the figure turned and stood still, and at the same moment the moon emerged again from

the heavy clouds and shone out magnificently. Pushing back the hood with a sudden gesture of her small hand, I was not surprised to see Donna Magdalena.

But Don Arturo! With a cry he sprang forward and threw his arms around his sister's neck.

"Magdalena, you have heard it, the silver horn. You too are seeking the Holy Grail."

I saw her proud lips quiver, and her dark head bend, as if with shame, but she did not speak.

"Ah! Magdalena," said the boy, "it is even as I said, you alone are worthy to find the Holy Grail. Lead on, sweet sister, and I will follow."

But all on a sudden she was weeping, and clinging to him.

"I worthy to find the Holy Grail!" she said. "Oh, Arturo, you do not know."

"Why, Carissima," said the boy, "why do you weep? The goal is almost won. See, if you will not go on alone, we can go together. Over there on the hills, the Holy Grail is passing. If we hasten we will surely be in time to reach it. Only last night Santos read to me from the Holy Book: 'Seek and ye shall find.' I knew it surely meant the Holy Grail."

But Donna Magdalena still clung to her brother and would not stir. She was weeping so bitterly



that I wondered if that dark horseman over on the hills could not hear her. His horn, for a wonder, was silent. It was well, I thought, that the young senorita should feel the pangs of remorse now before it was too late. Some one emerged from the canyon, and with a cry I sprang forward.

"Padre Paul!"

"Yes, Santos," he said, and then in a low tone: "I got your note, my son, only half an hour ago. Take Don Arturo away, and leave the senorita to me."

Oh! the blessed Padre, I could breathe freely now. Long afterward, little by little, I found out, and could guess, what passed after we left. Aided by Padre Paul, I got Don Arturo home.

"My boy," he said, "I think the Holy Grail has indeed passed this night. It has been here, Arturo, ever loving, ever watching, and has done a good work, a glorious work. Magdalena knows it now, and so will you."

"But you must go home now, my son," he added, "with Santos; the dawn is nearly breaking."

He pointed toward the East where a delicate pearly light was rising along the horizon, herald of a yet more perfect day.

The boy came toward me obediently. He would always obey Padre Paul when, perhaps, others could

not make an impression on his mind. As we reached the hacienda Don Arturo turned to me, his deep blue eyes full of a strange spiritual light.

"I think she saw it, Santos," he said, "the Holy Grail. It must have passed right by us, that was why she wept, poor Magdalena, because she *knew* I did not see it; but I will pray the holy Saints, Santos, and perhaps next time, when Arthur's horn sounds over the hills, I too may be worthy to see the blessed vision."

\* \* \* \* \*

And so it was that the brother's pure faith saved the sister from what she did not dream of, as she went to meet her lover. It was Padre Paul who met him that night before he reached us, and bade him go; for, yes, he was a villain, was Don Carlos. It was his lawful wife, a virtuous young Spanish girl, from whom he had obtained a divorce, in some court, heaven knows where, who had sent for Padre Paul that night. She was very ill, but not dying. All this Padre Paul told Donna Magdalena as he led her home.

Surely the secret of the divine love had touched her that night; for it was a different *senorita* henceforth. Tenderly she watched over father and brother. Beautiful were her errands of mercy to the poor, the sick, the unfortunate. To that dark

quest which would have led only to sorrow and shame, there followed now another and a better—the quest of Christian perfection—for I take it that not Sir Galahad in his noble knighthood, nor Elaine guarding Lancelot's shield, nor Arthur himself in his kingly state, sought or found a more perfect gift than did Donna Magdalena when, in the light of the Holy Grail, she learned to know and understand the divine message of love.

## RAMON.

It was in Texas, fifty years ago, that he came to us, the little Ramon, my foster-brother. No, not here, senor, not on the plains; but up in the hill country, north of San Antonio: the beautiful hills, through which ran the silvery Guadalupe. Ah! you should have seen that stream—its clear, shallow waters dashed over a stony bed, while along its banks hung long, trailing vines and branches of trees—in some places tall pecans and magnificent cypresses, standing like solemn sentinels, and casting dark, cool shadows across the dancing waters below. Northward the low lying river bank was changed to steep, rocky cliffs, along the summit of which ran rough mountain trails, some of them impassable except to us native Mexicans and our sure-footed burros.

It was one morning when the hot Texas sun beat down on the bare brown earth, lending a soft haze to the distant hills, that word came to my mother that the Senora Fernandez was very ill; and had sent for her to come to the rancho, some five miles from where our cabin stood on the banks of the river, just below the Zoeller hacienda. I was a boy then, about

ten years old, and my baby sister, Dolores, had just died. I missed the little *hermana* very much in those days.

It was a week before my mother returned, and then she said that the kind senora was dead and had left a little son, and that she must return to the rancho and take care of it. She bade me be a good child and mind the grandmother, which I readily promised and remembered only indifferently well.

After that the *madre* was gone for several months, and as she could not come to us, I used to walk the five miles to the rancho twice a week to see her; and that was how I came to know and love my little foster-brother, Ramon. He grew into a beautiful child, sturdy and strong; but very backward in talking, he was. When he was three years old and full of fun and mischief, he would only utter inarticulate little cries. Then the senor, his father, became anxious, and one day, with his Irish nurse, he took little Ramon to a distant city to see a great physician. They were gone a month, and when they came back the baby greeted me with smiles and outstretched arms; for indeed he loved me, senor; but Don Fernandez looked so sad; and soon I learned the reason; for my mother told me that the great doctor had said our little Ramon was deaf and dumb.

Oh! I used to pray to the compassionate Christ

and the blessed Saints to cure him. When I lay on my back under the blue sky, with Ramon tumbling over me, sometimes I would hear a mocking-bird sing in the trees nearby, and it seemed too hard that my foster-brother could not hear it, too.

"The child is happy," my mother said; "don't fret about him, Santos; the blessed Saints will find some gift for him in place of what has been taken away."

They tell me there are wonderful ways of teaching the deaf now, *senor*, that those who are born deaf and dumb can be taught to speak; but it was not so when Ramon was a boy, and hence I heard his father tell Padre Francesco that his education was going to be a "problem."

It was when my foster-brother was seven years old and I was seventeen—a big fellow I was—that there came to our hill country the *Senorita Carlotta Malo*. She had been born and brought up in Mexico, educated at a convent, and then the death of both parents left her alone and penniless; so she came to our country to teach in the school under Padre Francesco and the good Sisters. Yes, the school was up on the hill, not one building, but several, and in the smallest of them—a low, white, wooden structure, shaped like a church—the *senora* taught the little ones—bare-legged Mexicans boys and girls, some

Indian half-breeds and a few native Americans of Irish and German descent. It was no easy task, but the Senorita Carlotta loved them all, and that, perhaps, was the secret of her influence. I see her now, the dark eyed senorita, with her low forehead, on which her magnificent black hair grew wavy and thick, with her sweet smile, and her voice that had a tender sound when she addressed her little ones, like the tones of the Blessed Mother, perhaps.

It was the Padre who suggested to the Senor Fernandez that perhaps the Senorita Carlotta could teach our little Ramon; and indeed it was wonderful how well she succeeded. In the morning she taught her class of children, and then after the noon dinner I used to put Ramon on his donkey, and together we would climb up the hill to the door of the little school house where the senorita would be waiting to receive us, and where Ramon was always happy to come; for indeed they loved each other passionately, those two, and were never so contented as over their lessons through the long golden afternoons.

How did the senorita teach, you ask? By some divine or miraculous gift, I think, senor. She began by placing some object before Ramon, a cat, a dog, a leaf, from a tree, then she would spell it in writing and make Ramon go over and over the spelling. I heard her tell the Padre it was object teaching first

and the alphabet afterwards. He was wonderfully quick to learn, our little Ramon, and so eager about everything. He began to bring me things; an old horseshoe found in the road, a bit of stone from the quarry and every day a new flower, making signs to me that I must write them down for him, which I found a laborious work; for although I had been to the Padre's school, I liked not a pen, senior!

It was when Ramon was eight years old that the fine hotel for guests from the north was built, and shortly after a rich Protestant Senor, whose wife had died in San Antonio, built a Protestant Church in her memory and put it in charge of a friend of his, the Reverend Luke Mueller.

A gentle, kindly old soul was this Protestant Padre, though not like our beloved Padre Francesco. He had had a wife for one thing, and strange to say she had been a Spanish lady, though not a Catholic the Padre said. My master, the Herr Zoeller went often to the Protestant Church, and so did the guests from the north, who frequented the hotel in winter. Besides this there was a sprinkling of the German farmers and their families. It was a prosperous church, as the northern senor who built it had also given it an endowment. Next to the church was a native Mexican adobe house, and this the Senor Americano had bought, and fitted up as a residence



for the German pastor, and here he lived with his son and only child, Edgardo.

I liked not that young man, señor. He was twenty two years old when he came to our hill country. His mother had given him a Spanish name; but it covered not a sound, loyal Spanish heart, nor was the young man like his good old white haired padre. He was a handsome fellow enough, but with crafty eyes, and cruel looking hands that had a way of tightening over anything he touched, that spoke of a relentless and determined nature.

He speedily became very popular at the hotel, and in fact with every one except the Senorita Carlotta. I rejoiced to see that she, at least, seemed to share my dislike for him.

It was not long, however, before I began to see that the Senor Edgardo had lost his heart to the handsome senorita. He followed her everywhere, and was not rebuffed by the coldness with which she received his attentions—then I began to find out that some one else loved the Senorita Carlotta, none other than the Senor Fernandez, little Ramon's padre. His had been a lonely life since his wife died, with no one at the rancho but the Mexican hands and the little son who was too young to be a real companion, though the senor loved him devotedly. Small wonder, then, that his heart went out to the

Senorita Carlotta. Did she love him in return, I thought? He was a young man still, not more than thirty-five, and handsome. Better than that he was a noble Spanish gentleman, keeping up all the traditions of his race for courtesy and hospitality, on his American rancho. Well, time must show, I thought, and meanwhile I would watch. I knew the Senor Edgardo was wild with jealousy when he saw the good padre of Ramon so often with the senorita.

One afternoon the Herr Zoeller, for whom I worked sent me up the mountain with butter for the hotel. I had packed it on one of the burros, and ran along by his side, slashing my whip when the animal moved too slowly, or came to a standstill, as was often the case. Arrived at the hotel I delivered my butter to the *cocinero*, and then remembered that I had half a dozen bottles of wine which the Herr said had been ordered by one of the guests at the hotel.

I went upstairs to the Senora Elliott's room. She was a northern lady, who was wintering at the hotel with an invalid husband, and they had just been joined by their niece, a young senorita from New York. Just outside the senora's door I paused, for I heard voices, and presently I made out that the Senora Elliott and her niece were on the gallery that opened off their rooms. This gallery commanded

an easy view of the Protestant *Iglesia* and the *Predicador's* house. "Who is that white-bearded old man," said a fresh, gay voice, "who is just coming out of that fascinating little adobe house?"

"That, my dear," said the Senora Elliott, "is the Reverend Luke Mueller, our pastor, and a most worthy man. You must hear him preach next Sunday."

"The Reverend Luke Mueller," said the clear young voice, "and he lives in that Mexican house. Oh! Auntie, what a combination, how absurd. It's enough to make the ghosts of dead and gone Mexican's rise up in their might, to have a Protestant divine living in that old house, which, if it could speak, would tell so many old-world tales."

"Gracie," said the senora, "your head is full of romance."

"Not romance, auntie, but common sense. The Luke Muellers should live in brand new parsonages built of brick and stone."

"Perhaps," said the senora, "the Luke Muellers of the world have romance as well as other people."

"And does he live alone, said the Senora Grace, "or perchance, has he a wife as good as himself?"

"No," answered her aunt, "his wife is dead, and he only has one child, who lives with him, a grown son, Edgardo."

At this the young senorita went off into such a peal of laughter that I must needs laugh too, though I knew not the cause until she spoke.

"Oh, auntie, auntie," she gasped. "Edgardo Mueller! what a combination; it's worse than the Reverend Luke and the adobe. Edgardo! does not that conjure up in your mind a dark-eyed impressario who would walk the stage, or serenade his lady love on a moon-lit night;—and Mueller! shade of some little German professor, with his pipe and his beer, and endless *isms* at his finger ends. Oh! auntie, if you have many more such things in Texas I shall die."

"Grace," said her aunt, "you are incorrigible."

"Well," said the Senora Grace, "I've already seen Padre Francesco, he at least seems to belong to this enchanting region."

"I suppose so," said the senora; "the Franciscans grew up with the country."

By this time I thought it well to make my presence known, so I rapped loudly, and the senora bade me come out on the gallery. My errand was soon despatched, and I turned to leave with a side-long glance at the pretty fair-haired senorita.

"Auntie," I heard her say, "the boy is charming, such grace, and such a head. I would say his name was Pedro Castro, or something equally fine; but

after my late experiences, I won't commit myself for fear it may be Daniel Brown or something equally unsuitable."

"His name is Santos Trego," answered the senora. "He works for old Zoeller, who has a large wine and butter ranch down by the river."

Here I lost the rest, and, returning to my burro, we were soon going down the mountain trail. Ferrevently I wished that the Senor Edgardo would transfer his affections from the Senorita Carlotta to the Senorita Grace. She, at least, might tease him into a little less conceit, I thought.

\* \* \* \* \*

And now, senor, I have to record as dark and wicked a deed as ever disgraced this fair world that the Almighty has given to His children; but so it was, and out of the darkness and sin of this tale shines forth one pure, unsullied light, the love and heroism of my little foster-brother, Ramon.

It was one golden afternoon in late October, when Ramon was ten years old. For weeks the fields had been white with cotton and the harvesters were kept busy picking and binding the white, fluffy cotton, which ever and anon escaped from their hands in small bits and floated away on the breeze. Ramon loved these harvestings and was never so happy as when, his lessons over, he could run off and join the

men and women in the fields. All of them knew and loved him.

That memorable day I had been sent by the Herr Zoeller several miles to look at some cattle which he wanted to buy, and I was returning home just before dark, when, at a turn of the road, I came upon two figures.

I recognized them at once, the Senorita Carlotta and the Senor Edgardo. They were talking, and I saw at once that the senor was pleading his cause. It was in vain. Gently, but firmly, the senorita answered him, reminding him that she had never encouraged his suit, and that he must positively now and forever take a final no.

Somehow, this reply seemed to goad the young man into a fury.

"I will win you," he said, in a terrible voice, "if not by fair means, then by foul."

"You forget yourself," she answered, proudly.

"Yes," he said, bitterly, "it is easy to talk so. It is because you are in love with that black-eyed fellow, Fernandez, that you will not have me."

"You have no right to speak to me so."

"It is not a time for soft words," he answered.

"I think, Edgardo Mueller," said the senorita, "that enough has been said on both sides. I have

given you my answer; and I forbid your addressing me again. Now please stand aside and let me pass."

"You shall not," he said, seizing her arm.

In a second I had cleared the space between us, and had knocked the fellow down. He was up in a second, and then followed a hand to hand fight between us. I was the stronger of the two; but the young senor had been trained in athletics and fencing, and I had not. Gradually he was pushing me back toward some woods that bordered one side of the road.

Over my shoulder I had been carrying a long lasso which I had taken with me to catch and examine, at close range, the cattle my master wanted to buy. In the scuffle this rope had fallen to the ground, and had become entangled in my feet. This it was, as much as the senor's superior fighting tactics, which finally threw me down. In a second the Senor Edgardo was on top of me, one hand holding my two hands in a vice, while with the other he drew out the rope, and in spite of my struggles he bound first my hands, and then my feet; having done which, he hauled me up by a tree, and proceeded to fasten me firmly to its trunk.

"Now, you low-lived Mexican," he said, "this will teach you to interfere in another man's quarrel. You can stay here till some one sets you free."

I cursed him in good Spanish. What was the villain going to do next? We were a long distance from any hacienda, and it was probably the knowledge of this which had prevented the senorita from running away during the time that the senor and I were fighting. Well, she knew that he could catch up with her; besides, as she afterward said, she did not want to desert me. She had walked the country unharmed hitherto. After her lessons were over with Ramon, she had a two-mile walk to the long, low house, on a distant range of the hills where she boarded with the doctor and his wife. But our people would never harm a defenceless woman, and who would have thought of the *Predicador's* son playing such a part!

You ask what the young man did next, senor. Alas! alas! he cut off what was left of my long lasso and sprang toward the road, where the Senorita Carlotta still stood. I saw her glorious eyes flash on him in scorn, but there was no fear in her proud carriage as she stood there erect and beautiful. She knew now that she had to deal with a madman and a fiend, but there was no weakness in her mien.

"Stir a step," he said, "and I will shoot you, and shoot to kill."

I could have laughed at the fellow's melodrama had I not known the awful seriousness behind it all,



It seemed only an instant later that he seized the senorita roughly, and throwing her down proceeded to bind her limbs securely with what was left of the lasso.

In vain I strained at my cords with impotent fury, in vain I cursed the senor, and promised to kill him when once I was free.

It seemed an eternity, and yet it was only a few moments when, having fastened the last cord and driven some stakes in the ground so she could not move, he stood up.

"Senorita Carlotta," he said, "you are, as you perceive, lying right in the road; in half an hour it will be dark, about the same time the stage from the city passes here. In the rapid descent down this hill, and with the noise of the wheels, and the blowing of the horn, the driver will neither see nor hear you. It is needless for me to add that he will undoubtedly run over and kill you."

Oh the cold deadly calm and hate in the man's voice!

"Egardo Mueller," said the senorita, "think twice before you have murder on your soul."

"I take the risk," he answered, with a sneer.

"What have I done," said the senorita, "to call for such terrible vengeance?"

"It is not what you have done," said the man

clenching his hands; "but what you shall not do. Think you I will leave you to be won by another? No, if I cannot have you no one else shall. The coach is heavy, the wheels they cut deep, the horses hoofs they are strong. They will crush and grind that beautiful body, and mar that lovely face, until nothing is left but a miserable, shapeless, writhing mass."

The man's eyes and voice were terrible. I shuddered, and the sweat broke out on my brow. As to the senorita she said not another word. I think she had turned to the Father of mercies, and the holy saints for support in her extremity.

It had come to me that when the man was gone I might shout for help; but he was too far clever to forget a single detail of his revenge, and now he came toward me, and in spite of my protestations, proceeded to bind a long silken scarf, that he had taken from the senorita's shoulders, around my mouth and head. To this day, senor, I cannot bear the sweet odor of violets, because it recalls to me the faint subtle perfume of the flower that clung to the senorita's silken scarf, bound so firmly across my clenched lips and teeth.

The wretch stepped back after his work was done, and surveyed us with a cold, sardonic smile.

"Farewell, Carlotta," said the mocking voice, as

he passed down the road, leaping and running as if a thousand devils were after him and indeed, I think all the legions of hell were let loose in that hour.

"My poor Santos," called the senorita, "pray to the blessed saints for me, there is nothing else we can do."

Oh! to have pulled off the gag that bound me. Must the poor senorita die without one word of comfort? In those few moments, senor, I suffered such agony as the good God alone knew of. Well, if the villain had deprived me of speech, he had not made me deaf. My ears, sharpened by suffering, caught, far off, the patter of small feet; and then clear and sweet, borne by the breeze, came a silvery whistle, and my heart cried out: "Ramon, my little foster-brother Ramon!" perhaps help was near.

Long ago the senorita had given the child a silver whistle and had taught him how to use it, and it was an understood thing between them that if he could not find her, he was to blow his whistle, and she would know by the sound where to find him.

Up the road came the rapid, springing little feet, and now he has dashed right past me, not seeing me however, for I was just inside the woods off the road.

Ah! thank God, he has found the senorita. With a strange inarticulate cry, he dropped on his knees by his beloved teacher. From my tree I could see

him. He began tugging at the knots frantically with his slender brown hands; but they refused to yield, although the boy exerted all his strength. Then he tried to drag the poor senorita off the road, but although his physique was magnificent, she was heavy, and the child was only ten years old. I saw it was useless; that he could not move her. All this time the senorita could not use her hands to say a word to the child; neither of us could tell him of the fast approaching danger—of the coach whose horn I now heard, and that would soon begin rolling down the hill.

It was before the days of a railroad in that part of the country, senor. Twice a week the coach came from the city bringing the mail and passengers, and then it went on twenty-six miles beyond our little country, hence the driver was always in a hurry. The senorita lay midway between the top and bottom of a long hill, down which the coach always rolled rapidly. There was only one chance in a thousand that in the fast gathering dusk the driver would see that some obstruction was on the road, or if he saw, that he could not check the momentum of the coach in time.

All these thoughts flashed through my brain in a few seconds. Little Ramon had sunk on his knees again by the senorita, and, with his arms around her, was pressing his soft cheek against hers.

Again the horn sounded. Was it some miracle from heaven that just as the echo died on the air little Ramon sprang to his feet and commenced running up the road toward the fast approaching coach—Yes! he knew and understood now.

I heard the creak of the powerful wheels, the lash of the driver's whip, as Niccolo urged his horses along the road, invisible to us, on the other side of the hill. What happened next Niccolo afterward told me amidst laughter and tears. The dark had descended suddenly, as it does in the south when twilight is ended. My little foster-brother had no lantern, he could not cry out or attract the driver's attention, therefore, he did the only thing possible under the circumstances, and sprang at the head of the horse nearest to him, as the coach rolled on. They were going very fast Niccolo said; but not for nothing had Ramon been my play-fellow. It was I, senior, who had taught him to run, to jump to vault in the saddle, to chase a flying brancho; and I knew his young sinews were as steel. Like a flash he sprang at the foremost horse, and then hand over hand, while the animal plunged and reared and Niccolo pulled at the reins and shouted, Ramon drew himself up till he was on the horse's back. It seemed only a second later that he had vaulted from one horse to another, and was over the dash board,

and almost in Niccolo's lap, the while he seized the reins and tugged at them with all his might. He would have been stupid, would Niccolo, if he had not known by this time that something was the matter, as he quickly applied the brakes. The excited passengers were all shouting and asking questions, and some of the men had already leaped out, when the coach finally came to a stand-still a few yards from where the senorita lay. Our brave little Ramon! At the risk of his own life he had saved her. In a moment he had them all around the senorita, and strong hands loosened the cruel cords, and bore her to the waiting coach, while others, directed by her, came and set me free.

That is all, senora. A dark and hideous deed; but the Father of Lights watches over His own.

Yes, they married and were happy, the Senor Fernandez and the sweet Senorita Carlotta. I remember how our Ramon danced for joy that day.

What became of that villain, Edgardo, you say?

Speak not of it, senor, for it stirs my old blood. We never saw or heard of him again, though for years, in spite of the warnings of Padre Francesco, I was ready for him. But he had been foiled—the man whose heart was black and whose arm was strong—

foiled, thanks to God and the Blessed Madre, not by me; but by the child whose great infirmity was only measured by his great courage and love—my little foster-brother Ramon.

## CONCHITA

"It is a long walk, little one, but we shall soon be there." The old priest looked down kindly at the patient child plodding along in the sun, the while he himself toiled up the mountain side, his wide-brimmed Mexican hat not sufficing to keep the dust and heat from showing on his own tired face.

Visions of the cool interior of his low-roofed adobe house under the trees flitted through his brain. "So will it be at the end of life," he thought, "forgotten the toil and struggle when we reach our eternal home." The good old Padre had been down the mountain side to answer a hasty call to attend a dying woman. In a rough board cabin inhabited by Mexicans of the poorest class, he had found a woman, showing traces of refinement and beauty, now, alas! past all human help. She lay mute and insensible on a straw pallet, and it did not need the practised eye of the priest to see that her end was very near. Questioning the timid people he learned that the woman and a child had come to their cabin the previous evening and had begged for shelter; that she seemed only tired and not ill; but that in the night the crying of the child aroused them, and



they found the mother gasping and struggling for breath. She could only say, "A priest, a priest;" and so he was sent for, only to arrive after the woman had ceased to be able to speak. He questioned the child, but she was very young, not more than six years old, and could tell nothing except that they were Catholics, and had come a long way, partly by train and partly in covered wagons, and that mama was very tired and so was she.

So the priest turned to the dying woman and administered the last Sacrament of the Church, remaining by her afterward and doing all he could with tender, practised hands to relieve her suffering until an hour before sunset, when a gentle sigh showed the passing of her spirit. But the work of the good Father was not done—there remained her burial, which must take place quickly in the hot, southern climate. Beyond the hill, at a bend of the road, was the burying ground for the poor Catholic population—Irish, Mexicans, Indian half-breeds and negroes of that region. At least it was consecrated ground, thought the priest, whoever the woman might be; so early the next morning a strange funeral cortege left the church and started for the cemetery.

First came a rough country cart, drawn by two mules, in which was a plain pine box covered with

a Mexican shawl of bright colors; behind walked the child, and after her came a long train of men, women and children, some on foot, some in canvas-covered carts, some in vehicles of the rudest description—the men in wide sombreros, the women with uncovered heads and dressed in the brightest colors, of which yellow and a deep crude blue predominated. Ahead of all walked the old priest with his breviary, reciting the *De Profundis*. It was a typical Mexican funeral, the simple and kindly people turning out to show as much respect for the unknown dead as they would for one of themselves. As he rounded the turn of the road leading to the burying ground the old priest raised his eyes, his glance taking in the blue hills, deep fertile valleys, and rough mountain trails of southwestern Texas. Half a mile distant, just above the silvery Guadalupe and half-way up one of the hills, stood the white walls and broad galleries of a hotel much frequented by northern visitors. From the front of the house the little funeral train was plainly visible, the bright blues, yellows and reds of the women's dresses shining in the morning sun.

"I have seen many strange things here this winter, Edward," said a pleasant-faced, elderly lady, "but yonder procession is certainly new and curious."

"A funeral, I suppose," said her son, indifferently. "See, the parroco leads the van."

He arose as he spoke, from a rattan lounge, and sauntered to the end of the gallery, but memory called up a different scene from the one he was apparently gazing upon now.

Instead of the hills and valleys and trees of this part of Texas, he saw a vast, almost treeless plain, further west. Again he was living on a large cattle ranch that for two years was his home and whither he had gone to ward off any possible development of threatened lung trouble. In his mind's eye he saw once more the long, low, one storied house with its stout timbers inside and out. The wide patio where they took their meals for two-thirds of the year; and flitting across the scene, Mercedes, the fair haired, sweet voiced daughter of his English host, the ranch owner—Mercedes who got her name and her religion from her Spanish mother, while in physique she was like her good English father. He was with her again at a little shrine she had made among a few clumps of trees not far from the house, and whither she went every Sunday to pray, when to attend Mass some twenty miles distant was impossible. They were kneeling there, they two—the while Mercedes prayed for him and for herself—the *Ave Maria* of so many over-burdened hearts, rising

on the clear still air and floating upward above and beyond the blue ether, to the ears of the Compassionate Mother. He thought he had been a better man in those days. He had loved Mercedes when he married her after her father died.

Then came his own sudden summons home, when his elder brother was also taken away. He was now the only son, and heir to a large fortune, he had meant to return to Mercedes and acknowledge her. Certainly she was as refined as any woman he knew, and far better and more holy than any other. He wrote to her, and received her letters, all of them showing the woman's sublime faith and loyalty. Then he wrote he must go abroad with his mother, on business, and left hurriedly, three months after his parting from his wife, sending her a large sum of money to salve his own conscience. He was gone three years and during that time never heard from Mercedes, though he wrote, at first, several times. With his usual careless optimism he was sure she was well and happy, and by and by it would be all right. How long ago was that? Not surely seven years.

After the European trip came a second break down in his health, more serious than the first, and now he was in Texas again, gradually building up—with no real disease, only the constant tendency that made

care and change necessary. Bah! he thought, life was a burden under such conditions.

There was a soft rustle of skirts, and he turned to see his cousin, Alice Carnock, standing near him.

"Isn't it pathetic?" she said. "See, they have come to the grave now, and are lowering the coffin."

He turned again to the distant scene without speaking.

"There is a child," said his cousin—"poor little one. See, the old priest is trying to comfort her. I wonder if she has a father."

"Who knows," he answered; "this is a dreary scene, let us come away, Alice."

\* \* \* \* \*

Down in the valley little Conchita was inconsolable. What shall I do with her, sighed the old Padre, poor little one. I must inquire for her relations. So he took her up the hill and arranged to board her for the present with the young blacksmith and his wife.

"Shure," said Mrs. O'Malley, "and this is the place for her, Father. Niver a bit would I be lavin' her to thim Mexicans." So little Conchita was put in a small, but clean room off the kitchen, and here she stayed for a year, inquiry for any possible relations proving fruitless, until one day the old priest journeyed to the distant town and arranged with

the good sisters for her board and tuition, and hither Conchita came, weeping very much at first, and declaring she could not leave kind-hearted Mrs. O'Malley and the good Father, but ultimately very happy, and here she stayed nine years—learning many things besides those found in books, and such as are learned nowhere so well as from the good nuns with their refining influence, and then she came back to the old priest and to her little room at the blacksmith's cottage, a girl of sixteen, but as pure in heart and as gentle in speech as a child.

\* \* \* \* \*

And so it was ten years from the time when the little funeral cortege wound up the road, and laid to rest the unknown stranger, whose grave was marked by a simple cross. They are back again at the hotel—the world weary man, and his cousin Alice, who is now his wife. He had married her without positive knowledge of Mercedes' death, but stranger things are done every day. Was it the uncertainty on this subject, or because the seeds of incipient disease were bound to come out in time, that his health had broken down completely at last, and a hard, dry cough had developed? Be that as it may he was now never well, so he had sought once more the clear,

dry marvellous climate that has helped so many thousands, and cured a few.

It was Sunday, and the bell of the village church rang for Benediction as Alice came out of her room—a cool figure in pink, with a complexion as fresh as a girl. Passing across the gallery she came to her husband's couch, and announced that she was going to church.

"They tell me, Edward," she said, "that the old Padre has an adopted daughter who sings in the choir and who has a most wonderful voice. Don't you want to come, it is not far, and we can drive down."

Her husband arose. "Yes," he said, "I will go; and we might as well walk, I feel well to-day."

Leaving orders for a wagon to come and drive them home, they followed a mountain trail that skirted one side of the hill, until it wound around toward the east, a little lower down was the church.

Although they were not Catholics, Alice had the true reverential instinct that made her show respect to an alien religion. She knelt down and prayed for a moment, and then the old priest entered the sanctuary, and the service began.

What a voice it was! The low notes soft and clear, the high ones full and sweet. How it rose and fell, and filled the little church, as she sang the "*O Salu-*

*taris*," the while soft clouds of incense ascended before the Altar.

So absorbed was Alice in the music that she did not notice her husband until a slight movement made her turn, and she saw he was ashy pale, with beads of perspiration on his brow.

"It has been too much exertion for you, Edward—shall we leave?" she whispered in alarm.

"No, no," he said, "I will stay. It is nothing."

So still a little uneasy, she gave herself up to the service again.

But her husband!

Where had he heard a voice like that? Ah! merciful Heaven, he knew, and he shuddered and trembled. Never once had it occurred to him that Mercedes might have had a child. She had said nothing about it, but then he never heard from her after he went to Europe. Was she indeed dead and this young girl her child and his?

If the service would only end, so he could find out.

It was over at last. The priest had left the sanctuary and the beautiful voice had sung an English hymn, with the refrain, "I will console thee, I will console thee—" words which brought a pang to one heart at least, that knew it had no right to look for consolation. Now they were out in the open air waiting for the old Padre, who presently appeared



and advanced with simple courtesy. Behind him came Conchita.

Little she knew of the tumult in the heart of the outwardly self-possessed, handsome man, with his look of illness and high breeding, as she stood before him, the incarnate image of her dead mother. If there had been doubt in her father's heart before there was none now.

But it was to Alice the girl was attracted most, and she gratefully accepted an invitation to come to the hotel the next day.

"She is a beautiful child," said Alice, as they drove home, "and if I mistake not, from her eyes and smile, as good as she is beautiful."

Her husband said nothing. God alone knew the unforgotten memories, and above all, the strange new feeling of fatherhood in his heart. To acknowledge her and make restitution, that was now his one desire.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was about two weeks later.

"Something ails my little one," thought the Padre.

"I have not heard her sing as much as usual, and she is more grave and quiet," but he was a wise man, skilled in the human heart, and above all, he trusted his little Conchita, so he said nothing, but waited.

"Mon Pere," she said to him one morning, in the

language she had learned from the sweet French nuns. "Mon Pere, I am going to see old Betta this morning, but I will be back by noon."

He watched her down the hill and across the rough stony road. Old Betta lived a mile down the river that wound in and out of the village. It was a picturesque stream, not so deep but that it could be easily forded; and with fine trees, beautiful wild flowers and bushes of mesquite growing on its banks. There had been heavy rains lately—off and on for two months—and once or twice the Padre had thought of spring freshets, of which he had had past experience, even warning his people who lived near the river to be on their guard.

It was about noon, and his Mexican cook, almost as old as himself, had just summoned him to dinner, when the Padre was startled by a far-off noise that grew louder every second—a sound that certainly was not thunder. Old Maria, in the act of putting down a dish, hastily crossed herself.

"Madre Santisima," she exclaimed, "what was that?" But the priest was gone. Out of the house he ran, and was speeding down the hill before the Mexican woman could get to the door.

The sight that met the Padre's eyes was indeed appalling. The river had become a raging flood, sweeping down through the hills and spreading

across the fields and road. In fact, it was almost everywhere out of its proper channel.

The Padre kept on, his soutane flying in the breeze, and with but one thought in his heart. "Conchita, his little Conchita!" The direction she had taken was right in the path of the flood.

He saw strong trees uprooted and swept away as, forgetting his age, he ran. Further down the road, out of the path of the torrent, he met two Mexican boys of his flock, who hailed him with joy.

"Quick, Tiburtio and Semon!" he cried. "Help me make a raft; there is not a moment to lose."

"But it is certain death, Father," said the boys. "The strongest raft would go to pieces in such a flood."

The priest drew himself up, authority in every line of his tall, gaunt frame. "Do not argue, my children," he said, "but make haste. My life is in the hands of God."

They were near the railroad station, where all the lumber was received and exported, and it took only a few moments for the three pair of hands to construct a rude raft, which the boys carried to the brink of the river. On that side the bank was high and steep; the water, which, on the western shore, had spread out beyond its bounds, on this side now came nearly level with the top of the bank.

"Wait, my children," said the priest. He fastened up his soutane, knelt one instant in prayer, and then crouching on the raft, the boys gave it a shove, and he was off.

Afterward he could never tell of that swift passing through the maddened waters. He was conscious of being tossed about, of the onward rush, of being anon tangled up in debris, and of seeing dead horses and cows in the eddying waters. Once he thought he saw a man's face, and twice the raft was almost wrecked. His thoughts flew forward to the young girl who might even now be dead, and then back to his little church. He seemed in fancy to see the tall, dark cross near the altar. The dying eyes of the crucified Christ looked down on him compassionately. Surely He would hear his prayer.

Ah, yes! there was a sudden and tremendous shock—a cloud of spray enveloping him, and just as he saw that the raft was wedged fast between two giant trees, he heard a voice half-laughing, half-crying, "Oh, Mon Pere, how did you get here?" and looking up, there safely ensconced in one of the trees, was Conchita!

Aided by her willing hands, he was soon seated safely on a branch out of reach of the flood, the while she poured forth question and comment in her joy. She had left old Betta and was half-way home when

she heard the noise of the oncoming waters, and had just time to climb up the nearest tree, which, fortunately, was a strong one, when the flood swept by.

"I have seen dreadful things," she said. "Men and women and children in the water, till at last I had to shut my eyes; that was why I did not see you coming, Mon Pere; and now we are safe, thank God."

Safe they were for the time, but would the tree remain staunch? The good Father lifted up his heart and prayed. God and the blessed Saints would not abandon them now.

"I have wanted to tell you so many things, Mon Pere," said the sweet voice, but I had to wait. And then she related to him the whole story of her newly-found father, of what he had told her of her mother's past life, and that he desired now to make restitution and acknowledge her as his child.

"I showed him my mother's wedding ring," she said, "with the initials and date, and he said that settled it beyond a doubt. He has done wrong, Mon Pere, and repented, but he has also suffered."

"Yes," the old priest thought, "there could be no doubt of that; we cannot tread the flowery path of evil without the hidden thorns pricking our feet."

There was a swifter rush of the waters, and the great tree shook and trembled. Conchita put her strong young arm around the worn shoulders of the

Padre and held him tight. The flood might uproot the tree and they might go together, but the good Father should not fall from weakness or giddiness as long as she was by.

"Little one," said the priest, "you have told me what your new found father said; but not of your own wishes. Are you ready to go with him?"

"Oh!" she answered, and her voice was full of tears, "that is what has troubled me. I hesitated to speak, but at last I told him what has been in my heart a long time, that in two years, when I am eighteen, I want to be a Nun, and that I thought it would be better for him not to acknowledge me on account of the sweet lady, his wife. My mother was dead when he married her, but he, himself, says he was not sure of it. If this dear lady, who has been so kind to me, knew it, she would never recover from the wrong, and the risk he ran in marrying her—she would never trust him, or be happy again."

"And what did he say?" queried the priest.

"He accepted it very humbly. He seems quite broken, Mon Pere. I really think in this little time he has grown to love me, but he said as he had never fulfilled a father's duty, he must forego the father's privilege now."

Silence followed. What the priest thought was

something too deep for words, and in Conchita's heart there was a great calm.

Surely, the flood was lessening! The waters seemed to run more slowly, and, yes! they were receding. In another hour they had gone down even more, and just as the sun was setting in the west, and the whole horizon was brilliant with crimson and gold, Conchita's quick ears caught the creak of wheels, and presently, splashing through the mud and water, came a large canvas-covered wagon, drawn by four stout burros. Astride one of the mules was Semon, while on the seat of the cart sat Tiburtio, his practised hand and eye guiding the animals with unerring instinct. Conchita shouted, and the boys cheered in reply, scarcely believing the priest they were in search of was really alive. Leaving the young girl with Mrs. O'Malley, who alternately laughed and cried over her, the Padre, after a hasty meal, was among his flock—to comfort and advise the living, and search for the lost, of whom alas! there were a number.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is two years later. The quaint old Spanish Cathedral in San Antonio is filled with worshippers. The high altar gleams with innumerable candles, while before it stands a priest celebrating the divine

mysteries. Outside the chancel rail kneels a slender, black robed figure. She had come into the church all in white, now near the conclusion of the service this dress has been changed for the black habit.

Does she regret—is there in her heart any thought of all she has renounced, the fortune and the worldly career that were within her reach?

What is it she desires, asks the priest, and sweet and low came the answer: “The mercy of God and the holy habit of religion.” And then the choir bursts forth triumphant.

“The empires of the world and all the grandeur of this earth, I have despised for love of Our Lord Jesus Christ whom I have seen, whom I have known, whom I have loved, in whom I have believed, and toward whom my heart inclineth.”

*“Whom I have seen, whom I have known, whom I have loved, in whom I have believed, and toward whom my heart inclineth.”* Ah yes! Wonder not now that this heavenly love and consecration has surpassed all earthly good and gain.

Yet a little while remained on earth for the good old priest who had been as a father to his flock, and if at times when he bends before the altar during the singing of the *Sanctus* he misses a glorious voice intoning the sublime chant, he is content, for he knows it is well with his child—his little Conchita.



## THE STORY OF SANTOS.

You ask me to tell you a story, Caro. Before my master, the Senor Americano, went home (and he did not live long after that; for, indeed, he had the *tisis*, and his cough was bad), he called me to him one day.

"Santos," he said, "you have been a good and faithful servant, and I want to do something for you before I go away. I have sent for you so you can tell me how I may best help you."

Then I opened my heart to the kind senor, and told him I wanted a bit of land, and a house of my own; and he said he would see about it, the good master!

A week later we drove out in the country, four miles from the railroad and store, till we came to some fields sloping down to the river, and the senor showed me the land he had bought for me. Then was my heart glad; and Pedro (your father, Caro), and I, went to work with a will; and we built the little house where we soon went to live and where you were born. I found plenty to do in those days,

what with picking cotton in the season, and tending herds of cattle for the ranches, and planting my own little garden, my time was all taken up.

I have said our house was on the banks of the beautiful Guadalupe—a lovely river that was rarely so deep but that it could be forded—its waters dashing over a stony bed; and winding in and out of the country—here surrounded by steep banks and rocky cliffs, and anon passing through low lying lands; everywhere bordered by magnificent trees or bushes of mesquite, the long branches and vines in some places dipping into the water, making a scene of fairy-like enchantment. I can see you, Caro, a little child, with bare brown legs, paddling in the water and shouting for joy as you tried to make believe fish. And then I see other scenes; the Sundays and festas when your grandmother and mother, and you and I, would walk down the river to where we had erected a little shrine to our Blessed Lady. I carved the figure, Caro, and your mother dressed it; perhaps those who go to the great cathedrals would say it was ugly and poor; but we did not think of that when we knelt down to say the *Pater* and *Ave*, for God and His Holy Mother seemed very near in our little temple whose roof was the blue sky.

We had lived thus three happy years, when I got work to do for a German *rachero* who had the large

hacienda just above our field. A beautiful place it was, of hundreds of acres, and on the brow of the hill, right near the long, steep road that lead from the river, was the ranchero's house that looked more like an old Mission building than anything else. It was built of stone, one story high, nearly one hundred feet long, and was covered with whitewash.

Here and there were small, square windows set deep in the stone, and all across the front of the house was a gallery, completely shut in by a beautiful vine; beyond this was the farm-yard, and back of the house were the fields full of herds of cattle, all enclosed in miles of barbed wire fence. Still further west were acres of land, on which grew the grape vines that were trained criss-cross over low roofed arbors; for the chief work of the Senor Zoeller was the making of wine and butter.

I had added a boat to my stock about that time, and the ranchero wanted me to take his butter and wine down the river twice a week, and ship it to the city from the railroad station.

"You are the only Mexican I can trust to do it, Santos," he said. "Niccolo and Pietro and the other fellows would go to sleep on the way."

The work was easy, and the master though strict, was always fair. One thing I have forgotten to tell you, Caro, that he was blind. A tall and powerful

man, with a long grey beard, a patriarch, I once heard my old master, the Senor Americano call him, he nevertheless could not see, nor could he have managed the rancho if it had not been for his administrador and his daughter and only child, the Senorita Elsa.

She was not more than nineteen at that time, and motherless; but so sweet she was and good, I thought, even though in religion a heretic.

Tall she was like her father, and fair as a veritable Norse maiden, I heard the Senor Americano say, when she was only fifteen. He said many strange things, the senor!

It was the administrador I did not like, Caro—a bad man he was, I felt sure, and later I proved it. Where he came from nobody knew. Some said he lived a wild life on the plains, and others that he had fled from England to escape the law; but that was only rumor. There he was, trusted by the Senor Zoeller, and, alas! by the fair Elsa.

Some one else did not like the administrador, Caro. Next to the Zoeller hacienda was another, five miles distant, owned by the Senor Enrique Hernandez. Alone he lived with only the ranch hands, and a cousin of your grandmother's, old Juanita, to do cooking and cleaning. His chief companion was his dog; and his best friend was his

violin, on which he played till he seemed to draw the heart from you. I knew he loved the Senorita Elsa; and I knew the administrador loved her, too. Worthy she was of the best, for in his own country the Senor Zoeller had been of the nobility; poverty, hard and bitter, had driven him in his young days to our corner of the world.

It was customary for the administrador to go once a week to the city, thirty miles distant, to attend to the master's buying and selling; but there came one spring day when, to my surprise he suggested that I should go in his stead. Just at that time your grandmother was sent for to visit her sick sister, five miles back in the country, so it was decided for you and your mother to go with her, Caro, and for the house to be closed in our absence.

I had expected to be gone four days; but the good Lord who watches over us ordained otherwise. On arriving in the city, I found the man to whom my master sold all his wine and butter had been called away unexpectedly, and would not be back for a week, so, as there was nothing for me to wait for, I decided to return home.

I took the evening train, and alighting at the little station, started to walk the four miles home. I was trudging along in the late twilight, when I heard the sound of approaching carriage wheels on the hard

road, and presently a small covered wagon dashed rapidly past me. Late as it was, and quickly as it passed, I could have sworn that the sole occupant was the Senorita Elsa. For a moment I stood still, haunted by a deep foreboding. Was the master ill, or anything wrong at the hacienda? It was too late to stop the senorita, so I hurried on until a mile further, the mystery, as I thought, was solved. The river, which I had now reached, had become a raging torrent, sweeping down through the hills that lay to the northward. It was a spring freshet, which seemed with every rush of the waters to be increasing in volume.

At this point the banks were so high that it had not yet overpassed its bounds; but my house, a half mile beyond, was on the lowland close to the river. I ran the whole half mile, and arrived on the high, steep hill above the river and close to the Senor Zoeller's house, breathless, panting, with despair in my heart. Yes, my little house was gone. I could but raise my heart in thankfulness that the flood found it empty, when the sound of voices reached me, and, drawing near to the house, in a moment I had forgotten my own loss in what I heard.

Two figures, my blind master and the administrator, were standing on the brow of the hill in front

of the gallery, the administrador with a hand on the senor's arm, evidently holding him back.

"It is madness, sir," he was saying; "the river is a flood, you can do nothing, the Fraulein, Elsa is in Santos' boat, so far in safety; and there is no other boat near in which we could follow her."

"Let me go," cried the old man; "boat or no boat, I cannot leave my only child to perish alone."

From my position behind a tree I looked down at the river. By that time it was brilliant moonlight; and in the clear southern atmosphere everything stood out almost as distinctly as by daylight. I stared and rubbed my eyes—the Senorita Elsa in my boat! Neither were anywhere in view, and my eyesight then, Caro, was as keen as an Indian's. Pity for the blind old man moved me to rush forward; but I must get to the bottom of this, so I held back.

"The boat had come to the bend in the river," said the administrador, "and the flood is not so serious as some I have seen. Have courage, Herr. Let me led you back to the house, and then I will get my horse and ride down the river and summon help to rescue the fraulein as soon as I can."

My poor master! He suffered himself to be led back to the house and put in a chair on the gallery. He groaned and wrung his hands, talking in his German tongue that I knew not a word of, Caro.

What could I do? The ranch hands had evidently all gone either up or down the river, no one was near to help me—no one by to corroborate the evidence of my eyes that the Senorita Elsa was not, and had not been, on the river.

I stole after the administrador, who went at once to the field to get his horse. Suddenly the whole thing flashed on me; it was truly the Senorita Elsa I passed on the road, and she was flying to some point where she could meet this man and marry him. He, meanwhile, had deceived the blind man into thinking his child was adrift on the raging flood; and now he was about to mount his horse and ride away, leaving the good senor helpless, broken-hearted and alone! It was the work of a moment for me to spring forward and seize the wretch by the collar.

"You villain," I said, under my breath; and then in my excitement I had recourse to Spanish, pouring forth my anger and contempt, as I shook him again and again, like the puppy he was.

I was strong, but the administrador was wiry and he had evidently been trained in fighting. His horse stood under a tree, saddled and bridled, another proof that the whole thing was planned beforehand, and the incident of the flood used at the last moment to heighten the deception. With a sudden and



rapid twist he shook himself free from my grasp, giving me a blow which sent me reeling backward; in a second he was on his horse and, galloping across the fields, was soon out of sight. During our short encounter he had uttered no words, probably thinking, like a wise man, that it was best to save his breath for the combat. To follow him was useless; and then I thought of the unhappy senor; better let him believe his child was dead than to have him know she could desert him and deceive him so.

I hurried back to the gallery, and the master knew my step. He showed no surprise at my unexpected return. All was too strange and terrible on that fatal night. I comforted him and calmed him as well as I could. Long after, Caro, it did me good to know that I was everything to him in his sorrow. He bade me go for the Senor Hernandez. So with the first daylight I mounted my shaggy burro and rode the five miles to the rancho. The thought of this senor relieved me of all responsibility. I knew him—a fine and noble man, with good Spanish blood in him and loyal; not like that miserable foreign administrador! Why had not the Senorita Elsa loved him? Truly, the ways of a woman, from the highest to the lowest, are past finding out, Caro.

I poured out my tale to the Senor Hernandez. If

the story of the senorita's flight gave him a blow, he made no sign. He mounted his horse, and rode back with me to the dear old master. Then many days we spent in searching the river; but the lost senorita was never found, nor did the administrador come back. The old man thought he was drowned as well as his daughter, and we agreed not to let him know the real state of affairs. Better to mourn her dead than to know she had deserted him in his blindness and age.

Then a new life began, Caro. Your grandmother and I took up our residence with the master and cared for him, while the Senor Hernandez undertook to fill the administrator's place and manage the two ranches together; and thus passed four quiet years. In the long twilight, when the master and the senor sat on the gallery and I on some tree stump smoking my pipe, I would hear the Senor Hernandez play on his violin; strange, weird and beautiful sounds, that the master, who was passionately fond of music, loved to hear. There was one piece, Caro, that the senor played oftener than another; a tune that made your grandmother restless and that filled my heart with tears. I asked the senor one day what it was, and he looked at me strangely.

"You would not know the meaning of it, Santos, he said, it is '*Lochaber no more.*' "

Often I woke up in the silent night to hear the sound of the violin somewhere on the river's bank; and the tunes was always the same, "*Lochaber*," the reed-like strings would sob—"Lochaber no more, no more."

\* \* \* \* \*

The autumn, nearly five years after the senorita's flight, we had a busy season.

The harvest of cotton and grapes were good, and the fields were crowded with laborers at work from dawn until dusk. One morning I had been with the cattle for several hours, as my duty was, and I noticed that one of the bulls, an ugly fellow, seemed to be in a worse humor than usual, so I cautioned Pietro to watch him, and not on any account to leave the gates open or let any of the herd stray out in the road; but Pietro, that foolish one, had his mind on other things, and, alas! proved faithless to his trust.

The afternoon waxed late, and the great herds of cattle roamed hither and thither. The air was still and clear; and the men and women in the fields sang harvest songs as they passed up and down the long rows of cotton plant.

The master sat on the gallery and smoked. I see him now in his wide sombrero, his dark eyes beautiful, as blind eyes often are not, while his long grey beard

and grey shirt, his short trousers and high riding boots made him appear a grand figure.

Silent he sat until, knocking the ashes from his pipe, he arose, and walked down to the gate, feeling his way with his stick. He passed out of the enclosure and down the road, a way he had sometimes in the late afternoon; his dog, a Scotch collie, going ahead and acting as a guide. To me it used to seem as if he was always listening and watching for some one to come—one who never came.

I was rubbing down the master's horse, he and the senor had been riding that afternoon, when I looked up the road and far off I saw, outlined against the evening sky, the figures of a woman and a little child. They were coming towards us, some negroes or Mexicans I thought; the master, also, was coming that way, a short distance ahead of them. The out-buildings where I was, looked up the road toward these figures, the house and gate, while behind me, lower down the road, were the cattle fields near the river. Having groomed the horses I turned them loose and then came back to the fence and looked up the road again. The master was standing still now and seemed to be listening, while the woman and child were only about two hundred yards behind him. The child began to run; long after, Caro, I remembered thinking he looked like the Christ

Child. His fair hair was blown back in the breeze, his little arms were outstretched, while the red dress or tunic he wore was lit up by the setting sun, making him appear as if bathed in blood like a little martyr of God.

What was it that rushed madly by the barbed wire fence near which I stood? Ah! merciful heaven! the angry bull and it was making straight for the spot where stood the master—helpless, blind!

In an instant I drew back and had cleared the fence with one flying leap and was rushing up the road shouting for help, but too late, alas! too late. The bull, with its head low on the ground, passed the master not even touching him, then with a roar that was heard far and near, it lifted the child on its horns and threw it high in the air, continuing on its mad run, until it was lassoed by Pietro before more harm was done.

It was I who picked up the little child from where he had fallen in a near-by field. Thank God, Caro, the bull had not gored the tender little limbs, but the tossing and fall had been enough and when I knelt down by him he was dead.

Retribution had come and the Almighty was just. I looked up and felt no surprise to see the Senora Elsa as, with a heart-broken cry, she took her child in her arms. She had willed to be dead to her father

and now her child was dead to her, and it was her child, undoubtedly, who had been the means of saving the master's life; the bull attracted by the little one's red garment had made straight for him, passing the poor master by.

The blind senor drew near as these thoughts rushed through my mind. Did he know what it all was and would the shock break his heart? I heard the woman turn to him, "Father, it is I, Elsa," she said, "forgive me, oh! forgive."

And then the master looked grand and triumphant, like the Archangel Michael, I thought, or like Gabriel the Angel of Revelation.

"My child, my little Elsa, is it thou?" he said in his rich, deep voice. "Come to thy father's heart. I knew it all, long ago child. I overheard Hernandez and Santos tell of thy flight. I have watched for thee, my little Elsa, my poor child."

Oh, the dear, blind master! the tears rained from my eyes and I was not ashamed as I saw him hold out his arms and gather his lost one in an embrace that seemed as if he would never let her go. Surely love alone is deathless and eternal.

\* \* \* \* \*

There is not much more to tell, Caro. We laid away the little child to the chanting of the *Alleluia*

and the *de Profundis*, for the Senora Elsa in her sorrow and remorse during those five years had become a Catholic. Her husband had died and she was returning, like a prodigal child, when the swift tragedy robbed her of her little one.

I thought her stricken beyond redemption, but she was young still, Caro, and by and by she lifted her drooping head again and then was the dear master made happy when he was called on to bless her union with the Senor Enrique Hernandez.

Over beyond the hills they live still, the Senor, his wife and their children, for the master has long since gone to his reward.

"Happy," do you say? Oh, yes! as happy as we can be in this world, Caro, and I think that somewhere beyond the stars the little child and the master are happier even than they.

## IN PARADISUM.

"Is that all you can remember, my son?"

"It is all, Father, after that I lost consciousness and when next I knew anything they told me I had been very ill, and when I tried to think, my head ached."

There was a note of pathos in the boy's voice as he caught the look of kindly sympathy in the face opposite him.

"Try and think again," said the priest, "you recall little Panchita's christening and that angry words took place between Mattier and Mr. Carlingford, and that you followed them out of the house and up the road; surely you can remember what came after that?"

The boy shook his head.

"It's no use, Father. Something has hurt me here," and he touched his forehead; "when I try to think what took place that night everything is a blank."

"We must wait," said the priest, "sometimes after such an illness the memory goes for a time and then comes back; before Mattier's trial is ended you may be well, and able to vindicate an innocent man."



The two speakers—a bare-footed Mexican lad of about sixteen, and a tall, dignified priest in the dress of a Franciscan friar, were standing near the picturesque river that flows past the Mission Concepcion in San Antonio. The boy had come down from the hill country that lay thirty miles to the north, with a ghastly tale of horror and bloodshed, because, as he believed, an innocent man was being held for the crime, and no one but the good Franciscan fathers could unravel the mystery.

A mystery it seemed likely to remain for some time although Padre Ignacio worked with unwearied patience. If only Alberto could remember; but alas! memory was still a blank.

Up in the hill country the soft southern spring was breaking over the land, transforming the bare brown earth and naked trees into a veritable Eden of tender, delicate bloom. Late March in the South, and especially in Texas, is a period once seen never to be forgotten. But there was mourning where all should have been joy. The wide tracts of arable land, interspersed with woods and streams, on which herds of cattle browsed and slaked their thirst, and which for miles composed what was known as the Carlingford Ranch, was without a master.

It was some fifteen years previous that John Carlingford had come to Texas, and finding the land

cheap, had bought several hundred acres, erecting for himself, with the help of Mexican labor, a stone house of modest proportions, and furnished with as much comfort as the time and surroundings permitted. Soon he had herds of cattle and horses within the confines of his barbed-wire fences, and then, little by little, he began to add to the original building until it spread out into generous length. Its wide patio, broad galleries, and cool, lofty rooms making an ideal home. Of no especial style of architecture, it was, nevertheless, picturesque. Here and there John had built a tower, having in mind, perhaps, the abbeys and castles of his native Ireland. The building was well and stoutly done with stone from the near-by quarry, and for the rest, ten years of Texas sun, wind and rain had mellowed and tinted the stone, where it was not covered by the luxuriant moon vine that flung itself in tangled, careless profusion over stone walls and near-by trees, its star-like blossoms throwing out a delicious, fragrant sweetness on the soft night air.

The next few years found John married and with two little sons and a fair-haired daughter running about the ranch, devotedly tended by the bare-footed Mexican boys, whose various duties did not keep them too strictly confined.

John had married Agnes Raymond, the only child

of a neighboring ranch owner, and had found all the happiness he looked for until the day of little Panchita's christening, the child of his Mexican overseer, Mattier Olgin. On that night, the boy, Alberto, walking up the road at midnight, had found John's murdered body near the entrance gate of his ranch, while he himself in turn had been found half an hour later lying near his master with a cut on his head. When he recovered from the long illness that followed he corroborated the story told by the country people that at the baby's christening there had been high words between Mr. Carlingford, and his overseer, Mattier Olgin; but beyond this there was a curious conviction in the boy's mind that Mattier was not guilty of the crime that followed, though he had been arrested, accused, and was to be tried for murder; so Alberto sought his friend Father Ignacio and told him all. That he must have come on the scene and have recognized the real murderer, and have been struck down by him, seemed clear.

Was it Mattier thought Father Ignacio, or some other?

It seemed incredible that a man so uniformly just and generous, and so beloved by his men as John Carlingford, should have been killed by one of them, yet the wound just above his heart, made by a stiletto seemed to point to that conclusion and to no other.

The Padre had resource to prayer. If the real murderer was free the good God must touch his heart and make him come forward.

\* \* \* \* \*

The funeral was over and all that was mortal of John Carlingford had been laid to rest in the plot of the Catholic burying ground which he had bought and fenced in years ago when death seemed far off and difficult to realize. The last country cart had driven away, and only the devoted wife was left, kneeling near the newly made grave. Broken in heart she was; but with love and faith still triumphant—strong to live for her children and in hopes of a happy reunion with the husband she had adored, and whose loss had been the death of her own earthly joy. She had asked to be left alone a little, but now she arose and commenced walking down the path from the cemetery to the road. At the gate she was met by a tall, fine looking man, who approached her with quiet deference and grace.

"I had not meant to intrude on you so soon, Mrs. Carlingford," he said, "but with Mattier under arrest, Padre Ignacio thinks you will need some assistance, so I told him I would offer my services. I shall be only too glad to help you."

As he spoke he looked straight into the eyes of the

woman before him, noting a beauty that had only been enhanced by her sorrow, while she, on her part, noticed half vaguely the fine proportions and handsome appearance of the man. In her present loneliness and sorrow, and in the real necessity of some one to assist her in taking the direction of her husband's affairs, this man, Julian Valderpino, seemed her friend in need. They had known each other from childhood. Agnes Carlingford, an only child, had always been devoted to the handsome, rather melancholy boy, the offspring of an Irish mother and Spanish father. Since her marriage she had seen little of him, and his coming now seemed like reviving her youth.

"You are very kind," she answered, "and I do need some help very much; but not to-day. Come to-morrow. I want, above all, to try and clear Mattier; for I do not believe he is the guilty one. My husband always trusted him, and if they had a difference I am sure there was no bad feeling. Mattier was often stubborn and Jack was hot-headed; but they were loyal to each other."

"I will come to-morrow," he said, "and we can talk it over then."

They were at the gate of her house by this time, where Valderpino took his leave, but with the morrow he came again and on many succeeding days, going

himself in person to the town where the Mexican was under trial for his life. He it was who brought to Agnes the melancholy news that Mattier had been found guilty and sentenced to death.

"The circumstantial evidence seems strong," he said, "but it is circumstantial only. Nevertheless the jury convicted him on that; and he is to be hung within a month."

"It is terrible," she answered, "and the man asserts his innocence so passionately. He says he loved Jack, and that instead of killing him he would have died to save him."

"You are a woman," he replied, "and Mattier has worked on your feelings."

"I don't think I have false sentiment," she said, "but I had many proofs for five years of Mattier's loyalty, and I cannot so easily lose faith in him now."

"What are you going to do?" he questioned, as if the Mexican and his affairs were of little moment. "You need an overseer everywhere on the ranch; if you will accept my services I will take Mattier's place and help you to the best of my power."

As he spoke she raised her eyes, and it seemed to her he looked paler and older than he had done a month ago when he met her at the cemetery gate. How devoted to her interest he had been; how kind to her children; and she had accepted everything and

kept him up late over her affairs. Her woman's heart felt a swift rush of reproach.

"I have accepted too much from you already, Julian," she said, "and I have overworked you, too; but if you will really take Mattier's place I shall be very grateful. There is no one else with whom I can work so well. I would like to begin by asking you to go down to San Antonio and see Padre Ignacio at the Mission Concepcion. Tell him about Mattier, and ask him to come see him and me."

The man seemed to shrink back and then recover himself instantly.

"Yes," he said, "I will go."

He strode forth into the dark, soft Southern night and mounted his horse. Overhead the stars shone with unusual brilliance; he noticed them as he cantered up the road, as well as the scent of flowers with which the April night was laden. Flowers were Agnes' passion, and for some distance from her house to the gate the road was bordered with them. Back of the house stretched miles of barbed-wire fences, behind which were the cattle and chickens that made up the ranch live stock. This side, however, was their mistresses' special domain, where nothing more formidable than a dog ever set foot. The man riding on thought little of this—in his heart a tumult was raging.

"Ah! Carissima, how you trust me," he thought,  
"and I—oh, my God! My God!"

\* \* \* \* \*

It was early dawn at the Mission Concepcion. The shadows of night, speaking of sin and darkness, had flown, and in the east glowed the tender lambent light that heralds the coming of the sun's more glorious golden rays.

Early as it was a funeral was just about to leave the church. The Requiem Mass was over and the mourners took their place behind the bier, all save one dark figure that knelt, seemingly in deep abasement or woe, behind a pillar near the high altar.

*"In Paradisum deducant te Angeli,"* sang the choir:

*"Into Paradise may the angels lead thee; at thy coming may the martyrs receive thee, and bring thee into the holy city, Jerusalem. May the angelic choir receive thee; and with Lazarus, himself once poor, mayest thou have eternal rest."*

Ah, yes! above all, peace and rest eternal for the blessed dead!

The door of the sacristy opened and the priest, in the act of taking off his vestments, saw a dark, beautiful face, the eyes consumed with sorrow and grief.



"Come in, my son," he said, and the figure advanced and knelt at his feet.

"My Father," he began, "I am not worthy to kneel here. I am steeped in deception and crime; for, my Father, it was I who committed the murder, and not Mattier."

"Thank God," said Padre Ignacio.

"My Father," went on the stricken man, "I met Carlingford that night. I had loved his wife for years—long before she was his. He knew it, but she did not. He had a kindly and generous soul, and he stopped and asked me to come and see them, and then all the bitterness and jealousy of years seemed to rise up in my heart, and I attacked and slew him—an innocent man. The boy Alberto came up and I struck him down so he could not betray me, and then I fled into the night with a heart more bitter and dark than ever."

"Go on, my son," said the priest.

"And then," continued Valderpino, "I met her, my love, who had never been mine, and it worked in me like madness. I said to myself, I must win her. I could not sin so deeply with no return. I offered my services as her agent, and she accepted them. Her innocence and trust nearly broke me down; but desire was stronger than honor or conscience; the way seemed to open so fair and clear. I saw myself

her husband in time, for I felt she would marry me from gratitude, if not for love."

"Yes," said Padre Ignacio.

"And then, my Father, she sent me here to ask you to come and see her and Mattier, and I came just as the Requiem Mass began. I knelt down from habit, but when the choir chanted the '*In Paradisum*,' then my proud heart broke, and I saw all my wickedness and sin. I asked myself, could there be any rest for the man I had slain if one who was innocent suffered for my crime. O! Father, I have sinned almost beyond forgiveness; but now I desire to atone before more harm is done."

"My son," said the priest, "God has granted you a miracle of grace—in one instant you have repented of more than one deadly sin; doubt not, therefore, that His mercy will grant you an equally marvellous forgiveness."

"Amen," replied the stricken man, and then he rose up.

"I must go, Father," he said, "and free Mattier and suffer in his place; but before I die will you not come to me and give me Absolution and the Sacrament?"

"Indeed, my son," said the Padre, "I will be with you to the end." His voice shook, even as he made a great effort at self control. Of all the tales of

sorrow and crime that he had been called on to listen to, surely this was the greatest.

Out side Valderpino's horse was pawing the ground—what ailed his usually kind master that he had been ridden all night and had as yet had no feed. Well, if his master forgot, he would still show there was good stuff in him, Santiago, so he held his head proudly, his delicate nostrils quivering as he felt the spurs that bade him press forward without delay, the while his slender hoofs flew over the ground. Onward they galloped following the course of the river for several miles till at last it was left behind and they were out in the open country with only here and there a negro cabin or Mexican adobe hut in view.

In Valderpino's heart after the weeks of inward fever and unrest there reigned a great calm. Some lines Padre Ignacio had quoted as he bade him farewell, kept ringing in his ears:—

"My son," the priest had said, "remember the words of St. Bernard:

"The greater the error, the lower the fall,  
The greater His love Who pardoned all."

He thought of the compassionate Christ dying for such as he, of the pure hands of the Mother of Sorrows, which he hoped were even then lifted in intercession for him.

They had left the flat country on the outskirts of San Antonio behind now, and were pressing northward among the hills; the good horse was breathing hard and its flanks were covered with foam; but Valderpino, usually thoughtful of all animals, seemed neither to see or know.

It was just a mile below the town where Mattier was confined that the end came. In his haste to reach the doomed but innocent man, and free him, Valderpino had taken a short cut through an abandoned stone quarry. Across a chasm where the rock had been cut out of its bed to a depth of several hundred feet, was stretched a wooden plank over which both man and horse had ridden before; but Santiago had galloped nearly forty miles since the preceding evening, with nothing to eat. Was it because of this, or that the hand on his bridle was too tense that he stumbled and fell?

There was no cry from either man or beast as horse and rider went over the narrow bridge and were dashed to pieces on the rocks below.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I remember all, now, Padre," said Alberto—"It was Don Julian, and he acted to me like one who was raving mad and did not know what he was doing.

"Perhaps not," said Father Ignacio, "but responsible or otherwise, he repented, and was on his way

to suffer for his crime when the good God had pity on him and spared him that bitter shame."

"In Paradisum," added the Padre half dreamily—"into the holy city, and I doubt not he has found eternal rest."

### “ONE OF THE LEAST.”

You say it is a long time since I have told you a story, little one—what more can I recall out of the past that you would like to hear?

Something about the good Padre Paul who ministered so many years in the beautiful Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Well, it was not so long ago, not more than twenty years, that this story I am going to tell you happened. I was seventy years old then, and the Padre was eighty.

Fifty years, summer and winter, he had said Mass in the little Church that he loved so well, and it was there that he went to his reward. He was ready, the good Padre; and, thank God, though his end was cruel, it was without pain.

It was a time when feeling against the negro race ran high. When men thought nothing of lynching and hanging any black man whom they believed they had caught in an evil deed. It mattered not that he might be innocent; his skin was black and that was enough. You say it is much the same way now. Well, my little one, so it is—men's hearts do not change, and until some law is passed that will restrain the white man, the same lawlessness will

prevail, and the innocent, as well as the guilty, will suffer.

It was one Sunday after the last Mass, and the Padre had not yet gone home. He moved slowly around the chancel handing me the books; for I was sexton and deputy, then, and had been for several years—ever since I grew too old to work in the fields. I had passed into the little vestry to lock up the paten and chalice with the other sacred vessels, when I heard the door of the church open in a hurry, and the sound of a heavy foot running across the hard, earthen floor. I dropped the key of the closet in my pocket, and pushed open the swing door near the chancel; the Padre also had turned and I noticed that a shaft of light from the chancel window rested on his beautiful silver hair. The man who had entered was a negro—tall and gaunt, though just now he was crouching at the chancel steps. His breath came in gasps, as if he had run far and fast, and he was evidently in mortal fear.

"Mercy, Massa," he said, "de bloodhounds am after me. Sabe me, Massa, sabe me!"

The old priest came down from the sanctuary, and stood near the poor, cowering wretch.

"My son," he said, in the gentle, musical voice we all loved, "tell me quickly what is the matter, and I will try and help you."

In hurried, broken tones, and with short, gasping sobs, the man told his tale. He had been accused of a crime of which he passionately declared he was innocent, and finding his accusers were without mercy he had run away; he had been in the woods three days, almost without food, until he found the bloodhounds were on his track. He had run the last three miles without a single stop, pursued by the dogs and a party of men bent on lynching him.

The Padre's mild blue eyes flashed. Yes, he had always been the enemy of disorder and riot. Many a time I have seen him, with no influence but his voice and presence, quiet the roughest set of men. Indians, Mexicans or whites, it was all the same to him, and we all acknowledged his power over us.

In spite of his age the Padre could still act quickly. He opened the door at the foot of some narrow, winding stairs, and turned to the black man, who seemed half senseless from fright.

"Go up in the bell tower," he said, "and stay there until you are summoned." Then as the man ran rapidly up stairs, he shut and locked the door.

"Santos," he said to me, "the man is starving; go ask old Thomassie for some food and take it up to him. You can ascend from the little door in my study."

I gave a last look at the Padre, the dear Senora



Wentworth's son, who had gone to her reward this many a year. The fair hair of fifty years ago was now white as snow, the blue eyes were dimmed with age, the tall form was bowed; but in the Padre's breast beat the same true, loyal heart that had felt for us, our joys and our sorrows, all these years. Why did I not stay with him to guard and protect him with my arm that at seventy was still strong? I know not, little one, alas!

Left alone, Padre Paul went on with his work, and what followed was afterward told me by one of the men, a Mexican, less rough than the rest, who repented bitterly of his rashness in joining the maddened throng. It was only about three minutes after the negro had found refuge in the tower, when a howling mob reached the church door. Some of the men held the hounds in check while about a dozen of the ringleaders entered the church.

They were white men, most of them, and with all the white settler's hatred and contempt for the blacks. The foremost man addressed the Padre, who had descended from the sanctuary steps to the chancel rail.

"Father," said the man, who, although a Protestant, was not without some respect for the Padre's age and office, "we think a negro has taken refuge here. Have you seen anything of him?"

"Yes," said the Padre, "I have."

"Then you must give him to us, Father," said the man. "We have hunted him for ten miles, and are determined to give him the punishment he deserves."

"My son," said the Padre, "have you given this man any fair trial—are you sure of his guilt?"

A murmur ran through the throng.

"Try a black devil by law?"

"Eat him up first!"

"Starve him out!"

"Lynch him!"

Some one had opened the outer and inner doors of the church, so that those outside heard all that went on in the building. The murmur was taken up by those without. It was plain that the crowd was becoming impatient and dangerous. The Padre heard and understood; but he did not flinch.

"Men," he said, and his tones had the voice of authority, "this man, hunted and hounded, deprived of law and justice at your hands, came here and found refuge in God's house. He appealed to me, and passionately declared himself innocent of crime. I have placed him in safety, and there he shall stay until I deliver him to the Sheriff to be tried by fair laws."

The church was filling up now, and the men pressed forward threateningly. It was something that they

had been held in check so long. Suddenly there was a roar and commotion outside.

"Down with him."

"Shoot the black devil!"

"Tear him to pieces!"

Overcome by curiosity the negro had looked out from the bell tower, and had been instantly seen and recognized by some of those in the crowd. The men in the church paused a moment; but their temper was up, and a second later they charged into the vestry, and out on the covered gallery that led to the Padre's house. It took them only a moment to see they were on the wrong scent, and in a body they swept back in the church. In those few seconds the Padre had placed his back against the door that led to the bell tower, and there the now thoroughly maddened men found him.

Why did he not give in?

He must have seen that it was hopeless, that the men would conquer any way, but there was no thought of self or surrender in the calm, fearless gaze that Padre Paul turned on the rough crowd that began to close in on him.

"Father," said the first spokesman, "if you do not stand aside and let us ascend to the tower we will have to remove you by force."

"Look here, Father," said another man, who

seemed less swayed by passion than the others, "why do you want to save this black trash, anyhow? One nigger more or less in the world don't matter."

The Padre drew himself up to his full height, his eyes blazed, and his voice deepened.

"For shame, man!" he said. "What did He say, the Crucified—'Inasmuch as ye do it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye do it unto me.' "

For a moment the men drew back abashed. Some of them there were who had not entered a church for years; but there was no doubt that all knew and recognized the application of the text.

"You tell me," the Padre continued, "that the man is guilty—did any one see him commit the crime, and if crime has been committed are you sure it was this man who did it?"

"No, Father," answered the ringleader; "but he was found near the place, so we were sure it was he. No other black man was near, though we scoured the country for miles."

"And because you could find no one else, you take this man," said the Padre. "You would deprive him of the life God has given him. You would hurl him into eternity without a moment's preparation, if you could; and all without even the certainty of his guilt?"

I think the men were growing tired and were disposed to give it up. There is nothing like gaining time in such a crisis; and rough as they were the Padre's words had not been without effect.

It needed now only for some one of their number to lead them one way or the other; but alas! the wrong one made himself heard. It was the father of the girl who had been robbed and beaten who would not yield. He was the black-smith of the county, a powerful, brawny man, with a terrible temper, they said, one who was feared by all who would avoid a fight.

He was on the very outskirts of the crowd; but began now to push his way right and left.

"Have you become cravens, men?" he cried, and then he hurled his words at the Padre in a voice of thunder.

"Stand aside, old man," he said. "There has been enough of this delay. Open that door or I will knock you down."

"Never!" answered Padre Paul.

The men swayed back and forth, the smith tried to reach the Padre; but the crowd was now too closely packed for him to force an opening. With a terrible oath the man raised his right hand high in the air, and, just as I—who had heard that the men were now beyond the Padre's control, and who had got

out of the tower through the door leading into the Padre's study—dashed into the church, the smith let fly his iron bellows at the Padre's head.

There was only one second of pain, the doctor afterward told me—one moment, only, of agony, my little one; and then all was over. The good Padre had been struck on the right temple, and fell to the ground like a stone.

I knew when I knelt down by him that he was dead.

That put an end to the lynching. The men dispersed; all but the smith, whom I took in custody and handed over to the Sheriff, who arrived at the church with his men a second after the Padre died. The smith was tried, and paid the penalty with his life—twenty years ago, my little one; but we have never had another lynching since then.

We laid all that was mortal of the dear Padre beside his mother, in the little burying ground up on the hill.

Such a funeral as it was! His people turned out for miles around to follow him to the grave, and the Archbishop from the distant city said the Requiem Mass. He preached to us from the hill, after the burial, so that all might hear.

"This man has not died in vain," he said. "To many it will seem a poor exchange, the life of a great

and good priest to be given for the life of an unknown, ignorant negro; but such was the teaching of the Master. None were too poor or too low for Him, who recognized in man the universal brotherhood in the universal fatherhood of God; and what the Christ believed and taught, Father Paul sought to follow with all his heart. My brethren, let us return thanks for such an example, and pray God to grant him eternal rest."

That was all, little one; but how we missed him, alas! alas!

What became of the negro, you say? I let him out of the tower after dark, and gave him money to leave the country.

It was some comfort to me that afterward the real criminal was caught and confessed his guilt, and that the dear Padre had not died in vain for the poor soul, around whom he flung the mantle of his divine charity.

## THE BELLS OF SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO.

Looking from out the tower of San Juan Capistrano at the hour of sunset, the eye wanders over a scene as fair as the good Franciscan fathers loved to gaze upon two hundred years ago. Miles of rolling prairie covered with mesquite bushes surround the Mission, while to the north lies the old city of San Antonio set like a jewel in the Texas plain. Nature is nearly the same as in the days of the Spanish friars, but the beautiful city has grown beyond what they knew, though perchance they may have dreamed of its development. The roof of the old Cathedral of San Fernando gleams in the sunset light whose dying rays with all their splendor light up both city and plain. Through this scene of enchantment runs the silvery river along whose shores the fathers planted their different missions, destined to survive long after they themselves had vanished from the scene. The twilight descends just as the bells of the old Cathedral ring out the Angelus; the sound reverberates on the soft air until it is caught up by the other churches, and all the bells of the city seem to mingle in one musical harmony, "*Ora pro nobis*," they seem to say—"Ora pro nobis!" not



for us only, but for the spirits gone hence, who loved and labored and suffered in these scenes so many generations ago—"Ora pro"—Ah, yes! pray for them, until the earth gives up its dead, and the just judge recompenses all. In this evening hour their mystic spell is upon us, and we muse on the history of these souls who have so long since preceded us to the "place of refreshment, light and peace." So, as we wend our way slowly homeward, there comes to us from out a recollection of many legends and chronicles of these old Franciscan missions one story telling of love in the Springtime of life—of a sacrifice made in the heyday of youth and hope.

\* \* \* \* \*

Don Victor Gerrazas had been a grandee of Spain, who, because of impoverished fortunes and the death of his wife, had come to Texas in the early days of the Spanish missions, and with him were his two daughters, Margarita and Marta. They were beautiful, these young *Senoritas*. Donna Margarita, who was five years the elder, was like a Madonna of Murillo with the same strength and sweetness—the same wonderful dark eyes, that live in the painter's pictures. In her heart too, was the tender Mother love, for even as the Madonna cherished her little Son, so Donna Margarita loved her little sister Marta. Oh! this Marta: what a creature she was of laughter,

of smiles, of joy. In her hair was a glint of gold, while her eyes were of the peculiar shade of blue found in some parts of Spain. It was a great change from the civilization and refinements of the old world, to frontier life in the new, but Margarita and Marta met all hardships cheerfully. The town was well garrisoned. And the residents, nearly all Spaniards, kept up as far as possible the traditions and customs of their country. The beautiful grey walls of the Alamo, offset by two nearby communities of nuns, was the center of the religious life of the city. It was a time of peace, following the earlier wars between France and Spain to obtain control of that part of the country, and Don Gerrazas dreamed of the day when freed from all pecuniary embarrassment he could take his daughters back to Spain to resume the place in society and the world, that was theirs by rightful inheritance—meanwhile the good Fathers found their flock more than ready to assist them in all charitable work. New residents were constantly arriving in the town, many of them almost destitute. Among the Indians and Mexicans attached to the Missions were many who needed clothes, medicine and nursing. The little children in the Sister's school were constantly increasing in numbers taxing the resources of the Nuns to the uttermost. Amid such scenes the Spanish women

of San Antonio could be seen daily, and among the faithful band that formed Padre Gregorio's right hand, none were more loyal and devoted than the Senorita's Margarita and Marta.

There came one Christmas in the year 17—, Donna Margarita had been out to the Mission of San Juan Capistrano, a few miles down the river. She was on horse back and alone, save for a Mexican attendant who rode behind her on a strong shaggy burro. It was such a day as the Shepherds in Bethlehem must have known on the first Christmas Eve. The air was balmy, the sun warm, with just a tint of light frost in the atmosphere as evening drew near. Overhead the evening star shone pure and clear. The young girl glanced at it as she cantered over the excellent road made by the fathers from the outlying Missions to the city. Her eyes swept over the lovely country around her, so full of peace in the evening hour, then back at the brilliant star that seemed to tremble and quiver in the sky: so it must have looked to the Shepherds thought Margarita, in the heights glory, on earth the peace and good will.

There was a bend in the road that bordered the river, and as she turned the corner her horse shied violently, almost unseating her—the Mexican was by her side, with a hand on her bridle in an instant.

"What is it Juan?" said Donna Margarita springing from her horse. Even as she spoke she saw a dark form lying on the ground almost on the brink of the river. In an instant both mistress and man were bending over the prostrate form, and while Margarita unfastened the man's cloak Juan filled his hat with water from the river and dashed it over the upturned face that seemed like one dead. There was no response to this heroic treatment. The man had evidently been on horseback, but where was the horse? With tender practised hands Margarita unfastened his heavy riding apparel, and as she did so the Mexican's quick ear caught the sound of horses hoofs drawing near. He mounted a tree and looked towards the path they had just traversed.

"It is Padre Gregorio, Senorita," he said—

"Oh quick Juan," cried Donna Margarita "ride back and ask him to come here with all possible haste. The Padre is a good physician and will know what to do."

Juan sprang on his horse and was off, Margarita heard the meeting, and the deep exclamation of the Priest. It was only a few seconds later when the Padre was kneeling by her side, feeling the man's heart and examining him carefully. "He is not dead," he said, "only stunned, he has been struck on the head," and then he gave a few rapid directions,

while he unfastened a small medicine case that formed part of his usual traveling outfit, directing Juan to ride at once to the city for a litter on which to carry the man to some place where he could be properly cared for.

"He must come to my father's house," said Donna Margarita. "It is less than half a mile from here, and my father would not forgive me if I let the poor man go elsewhere."

Juan was gone in a moment leaving the Priest and young girl who did everything possible to revive the unconscious man.

After what seemed to Margarita a long time their efforts were successful, the stranger opened his eyes, looked wonderingly for a moment at the lovely face bent over him, and then asked in a faint voice but in the purest Spanish for water. The Priest raised his head, while the young girl held a gourd of water to his lips.

"Do not speak, my son," said the priest "you are in good hands. By and bye you can tell us all."

The young man obeyed like a child, and it was not many minutes before Juan appeared with the Mexican, carrying an improvised litter; very gently they lifted the wounded man, covering him with blankets, as it had meanwhile grown very cold; and then the little procession started for the home of Don Ger-

## BELLS OF SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO 397

razas, where they found Marta and one of the sisters from the hospital ready for them. The stranger was placed in bed in the best room and the sister took up her watch by his bedside. Midnight found Donna Margarita with her father and sister kneeling for midnight Mass in the Alamo, in her heart a great thankfulness that the blessed Christmas Eve had brought her such a work of mercy.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was Carnival time throughout the Catholic world, and no where was it more faithfully observed than in the City of San Antonio. There was to be a masked ball on Shrove Tuesday. "Let it open early," said the Padre, "and close early, so you can be home, my children, before Ash Wednesday."

Among those who seemed gayest and happiest during the festivities were Don Ortiz de la Cruz and the Senoritas Margarita and Marta. Three months had come and gone since Don Ortiz had been carried to the Senor Gerrazas' house. His recovery had been slow, obliging him to remain six weeks under the Gerrazas' hospitable roof.

Descended from an ancient Spanish house, Don Ortiz had entered the army and had been sent to America. He was on his way to join the garrison in San Antonio when he had been thrown from his horse

and was found by Donna Margarita. Don Gerrazas was delighted with the handsome, well bred young man, who looked every inch a soldier and a gentleman. As to what was thought of him by the Senoritas' Margarita and Marta, who that has tried to fathom a woman's heart can say.

The streets were gay that night as the two sisters drove to the Carnival hall. In looks they were dissimilar, but in height and carriage they were singularly alike. It needed a practised ear also, to distinguish their voices, which were low and musical. In the costumes they had chosen, and with their masks, it was hard to tell them apart. Marta in soft white drapery, covered with silver, was supposed to impersonate a water nymph, while her sister was attired in a Moorish costume of the Thirteenth Century. The material for their dresses they had found in a chest brought by their father from Spain, and their own clever fingers had cut and made the costumes.

The ball was at its height when Margarita, who had been dancing with a youth dressed as Don Quixote, was accosted by a cavalier of the time of Philip II. Who bowing low, requested the pleasure of the next dance. "I think I know you Senorita," he said, as he led her away. "Don Ortiz," said

Margarita, and then she laughed. "Your voice betrays you Senor."

They went through the dance with pleasant word and jest.

Long after Donna Margarita remembered how light her heart was that night. "Senorita," said Don Ortiz, "may I call on you to-morrow? I have something special I want to say, but I cannot say it here."

"Yes," said Donna Margarita, very low, "I think you understand me, Senorita," he replied, sweeping the ground with his hat. And just then another partner claimed the young girl, and led her out to the dance.

What she did or said the rest of the evening Donna Margarita hardly knew. She felt as in a dream, for had there not been tones in Don Ortiz's voice, and a reverence in his manner, that could mean only one thing.

\* \* \* \* \*

From midnight until dawn the city slept. A grey cloud passed over the sky and darkened the waning moon, the light of the stars vanished. Mirth and joy were giving place to lamentations and sorrow, for was not the Lord of heaven and earth about to enter on His fast and final agony. With the first



streaks of the sunless dawn the city became alive with men and women hastening to the Alamo. With the quick revulsion of feeling of the Southern nations, their three days pursuit of pleasure was forgotten, and their minds were atuned to the fast they had entered on. It is the adaptability to the environment of the moment which is not understood by the sober North and which makes them think the three days Carnival a strange preparation for Lent.

Donna Margarita advanced with her father and sister to the chancel rail and knelt to receive the ashes.

"*Memento, homo,*" said the priest, "*Quia pulvis es, et in pulverem reverteris,*" sang the choir, let us fast and lament, let us entreat the Lord to have mercy, and to close not the mouths of those who sing to Him and whose hearts look for happiness.

"Grant us, O Lord," said the priest, "to begin our Christian warfare with holy fasts, that as we are about to fight against the spirits of wickedness, we may be defended by the aids of self denial."

Not in vain does the liturgy arm us for the conflict, if we fail it is because of our own sin, and not from any fault of our holy Mother, the Catholic and Apostolic Church.

The solemn service was over and the vast congregation came out on the square in front of the Church.

It seemed natural for Donna Margarita to walk home with her father, and for Marta to be joined by Don Ortiz. He accepted the invitation to accompany them home and partake of a light repast, and it still seemed natural that afterward, he and Marta should wander forth in the garden while Donna Margarita should attend to her household duties. She could wait, she thought, what her lover had to say could be said better by and bye, and Marta, dear child, with her sunny face, her laughter and sweet seriousness could meanwhile entertain him who loved her as a brother. Donna Margarita was detained longer than she expected; after her household duties, her father called her in his office, but at last she was free, and picking up her hat, for the sun had come out and it was getting hot, she wandered forth in the garden. She rightly guessed that her sister and Don Ortiz must have gone to a seat at the end of the grounds that was completely hidden from the view of anyone approaching from the house, by a thick growth of mesquite bushes.

Donna Margarita walked slowly, drinking in the clear, beautiful air, and all the signs of the coming Southern Spring.

A narrow path nearly one hundred feet in length, led through the bushes.

What was it that made Donna Margarita stop

suddenly and press her hands to her heart, the sound of a beloved voice had reached her, and what it said was not for her.

"Dearest," Don Ortiz was saying, "I have loved you from the first moment I saw you, all through my illness you seemed to me like an angel sent from God."

"I thought it was Margarita," said Marta.

"No," answered Don Ortiz, "Your sister, she is noble, she is grand, but you alone, I love, carissima."

Donna Margarita turned and went back to the house in her heart a dumb anguish of pain. She understood it all now. Don Ortiz had taken her for her sister the previous night, she remembered that when he said he knew her, she had not spoken, her own name, nor had he, each had taken it for granted that the other knew. Once in her room the young girl fell on her knees by her bed. She could not pray connectedly, her mind was in a tumult. She could not even weep to relieve her over burdened heart. It was a fierce temptation that assailed her, one moment rebellion and despair. Had it not been she who had found him, and perhaps saved his life? Then came other thoughts. Marta loved him, Marta was sweet and loyal and true, and deserved her happiness.

Margarita raised her eyes to the crucifix that hung over her bed.

"My child," the Christ seemed to say, "Deny thyself, take up thy cross and follow me." Lower and lower bent the dark beautiful head. Memory took her back to the morning service, and to the sublime prayers of the liturgy. Had she not joined with the priest in a petition that they might begin the solemn fast by fighting against the spirit of wickedness. Once more she raised her head and looked at a picture that hung near her Crucifix, it was a small Spanish painting and represented One whose hands were clasped and bound, and on whose brow stood drops of blood." "A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Long she prayed until the warfare was ended and victory gained. Margarita crossed herself reverently, "So help me Christ and His holy Mother," she said.

When Marta and Don Ortiz returned to the house full of their happiness, they found as cordial a welcome and congratulations from Donna Margarita as from the delighted father. Marta noticed how pale her sister was, but attributed it to the fast of the day. She was brimming over with happiness, and if at times it brought a pang to Margarita's heart, she was a brave woman and did not flinch.

\* \* \* \* \*

Don Ortiz took his bride back to Spain, and after the death of her father Donna Margarita entered a Sisterhood. She lived many years loved and adored by all who knew her—there may still be seen the quaint old convent garden on the banks of the river where she used to walk with her nuns at the hour of recreation. The rose bushes that grew in tangled luxuriance, are as beautiful as those she used to train and tend. The little children and the poor who come to the convent gate, Americans, Mexicans, and Indian half breeds might be the same people that Donna Margarita taught and nursed and led toward the Kingdom of God.

And the bells of San Juan Capistrano? Only the central bell remains, that was the gift of Don Victor Gerrazas in memory of his wife; but tradition has it that after he returned to Spain Don Ortiz shipped two beautiful bells to San Juan that were placed in the tower. One bell was silver, inscribed with the name Marta a thank offering from Don Ortiz for the gift of his beautiful wife. The other bell was bronze, and was marked "Margarita," "for," said Don Ortiz, "had it not been for her I would not have lived, or attained to my present happiness."

Generations passed, and there they hung and swayed in the breeze; the silver bell to commemorate the one who was all light and laughter, and the bronze

## BELLS OF SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO 405

bell with its strength and musical sweetness, true type of her who was like Murrillo's Madonnas, the dark eyed, loyal Margarita.

## A STORY OF THE HOLY VASE.

It was the fourth century after Clovis, and the Archbishop Hincmar sat in the sacristy of his Cathedral at Rheims deep in thought. It was Wednesday in Holy Week—the great week—when the whole Christian world laid aside all other tasks or amusements to follow its suffering Redeemer in His *via Crucis*.

A tap at the door disturbed the Archbishop's meditation, and, in reply to his "*Entrez*," the massive door leading from the sacristy into the choir opened and his secretary stood before him. In his hand he held a small jar or flask.

"Reverend Father," he said, "a monk has just come asking for oil from the holy Ampoule to anoint one of the Brothers who is ill; and when I went for the vase, meaning to send it by one of the minor canons, behold I found it empty."

The Archbishop wheeled around in his chair with an exclamation of surprise.

"Empty!" he said. "Only yesterday morning I carried it to the bedside of the Pere Gaston, and after anointing him and coming away I noticed there was

enough oil left to last until Holy Thursday, when a new supply is blessed for the year."

"So I thought, Reverend Father," said the secretary.

"Never since the time of Clovis, when an angel so miraculously brought it from heaven, has the flask been empty—and now!"

The Archbishop arose from his chair and paced back and forth very much disturbed. "It is most strange," he said. "You found the holy Ampoule locked up as usual with the sacred vessels used at Mass?"

"Yes, Reverend Father," answered the secretary.

"And no one has had the key but yourself?" added the Archbishop Hincmar.

"No one, Reverend Father," said the secretary. "I carry the keys with me all day, and at night they hang on a nail near my bed."

"Most strange, most strange," said the Archbishop again, "but there is nothing to be done seeing that the oil is gone. The faithful will have to use the ordinary oil of Catechumens until Holy Thursday when I will bless new oil for the Sainte Ampoule." Meanwhile, Frere Felix," he added "you had better try and investigate the matter. If you find out anything please report to me at once." The secretary bowed and withdrew. Left alone the Arch-



bishop sat down and tried to resume work on the sermon he was preparing for Easter; but the mysterious tampering with the holy Ampoule had disturbed him too seriously for his mind to return readily to his task, so presently he laid down his pen, and pushing aside the papers before him he arose and went to a shelf where lay some manuscript in leather bindings. Selecting one whose cover showed signs of more wear than the others, the Archbishop returned to his seat, and unlocked the case. The manuscript he drew out was yellow with age, and the ink browned by time. It set forth in good churchly Latin that in the fifth century of our Lord, Clovis being about to be crowned King of the Franks, an angel had descended from heaven bearing a flask of most delicate workmanship in which was the oil or chrism for the King's coronation, by right of which, henceforth and forever, the kings of France were to take precedence over all others; and further, that because of this mysterious mark of divine favor the same holy Ampoule was to be cherished most carefully at the Cathedral at Rheims and made use of when occasion required, either at the coronation of the French Sovereigns, or when the Catechumens, the sick or the candidates for confirmation were about to be anointed.

Long the Archbishop pondered over the sonorous

Latin, then he replaced the manuscript and glanced at the hour glass. It was nearly time for the office of Tenebrae to be sung in the Cathedral that night.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was the Saturday before Palm Sunday, four days before the mysterious disappearance of the oil from the Sainte Ampoule, High up on the top floor of a narrow building in one of the poorest streets of Rheims a young girl lay mortally ill. In spite of the wasting fever that held her in its grasp, her face was unmistakably beautiful; a dark, southern face, all sweetness and light, if we are to judge by the glance that she occasionally threw at two kneeling figures near her bed: an elderly woman, who, in youth, must have resembled her daughter; and a young man, tall and strong, whose fair hair and beard offered a striking contrast to the girl's dark beauty.

As the two figures knelt they prayed aloud; reciting alternately a petition from the Psalter of Jesus, until finally, the monotonous repetitions of the words seemed to soothe the sufferer, and she sank into a troubled sleep. The prayer being ended, the man and woman arose, and withdrawing to the other end of the room, conversed in low tones.

"It is now the sixth day of the fever," the woman

said, "and she grows no better. I know not what to do, Antoine."

"What says the leech?" answered the young man.

"He is greatly troubled," replied the mother. "He left some herbs to be made into a hot posset, and told me to give it to her every hour; but so far, the fever is no less; and he fears that unless it is broken by to-morrow, her strength will not hold out."

The young man crept across the room and looked long and earnestly at his betrothed, so ill now, and they were to have been married in Easter week!

"O, Jesu!" he murmured, "suffer not my beloved to be taken from me so near the consummation of our joy."

He made the sign of the cross over Renee's dark head, then, with his own head bowed, he passed from the room. Too well he knew the slender thread on which her life hung. The blessed Saints would surely inspire him to find some cure.

\* \* \* \* \*

High Mass was over in the glorious Cathedral of Rheims on Palm Sunday. Antoine, his fair head towering over his companions, came out on the Square in front of the vast edifice, and turning to his left, walked down one of the narrow streets of the city. A clatter of horses' hoofs smote on his ear, and

presently the Archbishop's carriage passed him, attended by a single outrider. Antoine nodded as he recognized in the man on horseback his brother, the Archbishop's secretary, Frere Felix. Further on he met a bare-footed monk, and seeing him, he paused.

"Know you, Brother," he said, "where the Archbishop has been in such state this morning, instead of singing the High Mass?"

"Verily friend," answered the monk, "the Pere Gaston lies dangerously ill of a fever, and the Archbishop has been at his bedside with the miraculous Ampoule to anoint him with the oil, lest perchance he die."

Like a flash the thought came to Antoine—the Sainte Ampoule! Here, indeed, was cure for Renee if he could obtain it; but could he?

As the oil was blessed yearly on Holy Thursday, the last few days of Lent the supply was naturally rather low. Hence it was more common to reserve the small quantity left in case it was needed to anoint the sovereigns of France, the clergy, or the Religious; the ordinary oil of Catechumens being employed for the laity. Well Antoine knew, therefore, that his request for the Sainte Ampoule if he made it, would have to be kindly but firmly refused.

Thinking thus, he arrived at Renee's door, and

hastened up the dark, narrow stairs to the floor that she and her mother occupied. A sound of weeping met his ear as he tapped lightly at the door which was opened by the mother with finger on her lips, the while her noiseless sobs shook her. Antoine entered quietly and closed the door.

"She sleeps?" he said, looking toward the straw pallet in one corner of the room.

"Alas! yes," said the mother, "but it is the sleep of stupor. We cannot rouse her. Look, she scarcely breathes; the leech fears she will die about sundown, or else surely at midnight."

"She shall not die," said Antoine. He straightened himself up as he spoke, strong with a resolution suddenly taken; and in a moment become a part of himself. "Courage, *mon amie*," he said, "I go hence; but I will return before another day with something that will, I think, cure *la petite chérie*."

His blue eyes gleamed, his voice rang with hope; the mother felt, as it were, new born into life and joy.

"Go Antoine, go," she said, "and I will kneel here and pray. Jesus and the Sainte Vierge will hear my supplication."

The young man crossed the room and bending down, reverently kissed the slender brown hand that lay on the coverlid, marking as he did so, how hot it

was. A few more hours and the fever would be banished, he thought, so strong was his faith in the idea that had come to him.

Of the right or wrong of the matter he would not let himself think. Renee must be saved, and only through the Sainte Ampoule could that be done, therefore the Sainte Ampoule she must have. But how to get it? His brother, Frere Felix, the Archbishop's secretary, was the custodian of the keys, and well Antoine knew that he would not give him the holy vessel or its contents, therefore he must take it by stealth.

He walked toward the Cathedral that afternoon and arriving there found the Cure saying Vespers. The Archbishop was not in his stall, so he at least was out of the way. Antoine breathed more freely.

Vespers ended, the congregation streamed out of the sacred edifice; but Antoine remained kneeling near a massive stone pillar; as he knelt he saw his brother cross the nave and enter the sacristy. The difficulty that had so far confronted him as to how he was to get hold of the key to the closet where the sacred vessels were kept, was suddenly solved. Frere Felix slept in a small cell built next the organ loft with a library opening off of it. Antoine could conceal himself in the library, and after his brother was asleep he could secure the keys, get the holy

oil, return the keys to their hanging place over the Frere's bed, and make all speed in reaching Renee. It was about seven o'clock now, and he had not supped; but of that he thought nothing. His brother would retire about nine, and he hoped would fall asleep immediately. Softly Antoine ascended the stairs to the organ loft until he reached his brother's room, which was, as he had expected, unlocked. The rooms were familiar to him, and he knew there was a cupboard in the wall of the library where he could hide with little fear of discovery. It was a long time for Antoine to wait, especially as he was so near the great organ, that when compline was sung at eight o'clock the thunder of the mighty instrument was deafening. It was over at last, and Antoine knew his brother would retire immediately after the service. He scarcely breathed when at last he heard Frere Felix's heavy tread ascending the stairs; now he had crossed the organ loft and was entering his bed room.

Antoine listened with all his ears. The secretary, no doubt, was tired after the long services of Palm Sunday; but to-night it seemed to the impatient watcher as if he were unnecessarily slow in retiring. Once he entered the library; but it was only to replace a manuscript of the holy office used on Palm

Sunday to its leather case that lay on a closet shelf near the wall.

In half an hour all was silent and after waiting ten minutes more and hearing no sound, Antoine left the cupboard and advanced on tiptoe to the door that separated the library from the sleeping room. He listened, and knew by his brother's regular breathing that he was asleep. Lightly he tiptoed into the room, guided by the paschal moon which shed a soft radiance on the bare white walls of the Frere's cell.

Yes, there were the keys hanging on the heavy nail just above the small iron bed. He held his breath as he reached forward and grasped them; pausing for a second to see if his brother stirred, he turned and sped from the room. Across the organ loft, so dark and ghostly he ran: and then down the stairs, and now he was in the great, empty, silent Cathedral. Stay! was that a shadow cast by the moon, or was it a marble statue, or perchance some Saint with raised arm and gleaming eyes, waiting to avenge this sacrilege?

Antoine waited not to see; before him rose Renee's dying face, as it looked when he last saw her. Might it not even now be too late!

He has reached the sacristy at last. Quickly he walked up to the massive door of the cupboard and



unlocked it: within was a second door, whose iron bars were thickly studded with nails, this, also, Antoine unlocked and opened. It moved heavily and slowly, or so it seemed to his fevered impatience. There they stood on the different shelves: the massive gold and silver vessels used in the Church services. Here was a gold paten, flashing with jewels, and near by stood a carved chalice of priceless worth. But Antoine saw them not, his eyes and his hands were on the Sainte Ampoule at nearly the same moment. Taking a small glass jar from his pocket, he quickly filled it with the oil from the sacred vessel, even to the last drop. Renee should not be stinted if quantity would work her cure! He closed and locked the doors again, after replacing the holy Ampoule in the same place where he had found it. It took only a few minutes to return the keys to the nail above his sleeping brother's bed; and in five minutes more he emerged from a small side door in the Cathedral, and was speeding through the silent streets to Renee. Faster and faster he ran. A few belated pedestrians turned and looked after his tall flying figure; but no one stopped him. It was eleven o'clock when he finally climbed the stairs and knocked gently on the door of his betrothed's room. It was opened softly by the Mere Chocarne, Renee's mother.

"How is she?" gasped Antoine, for he was breathless with his run and the rapid mounting of the steep stairway.

"Since seven she has been sinking," said the mother—her tone was dull and lifeless as of one who had no hope. Antoine crossed the room and knelt down by the young girl. Yes, she was very far gone. The fever was broken, but her hands were icy cold—her lips blue, on her brow lay a clammy sweat, and her chest rose and fell with her labored breathing.

With trembling fingers Antoine unfastened the glass jar and then slowly and deftly he poured the contents over the girl's head and forehead and on the hands that lay so white and still outside the coverlid. Then he clasped his own hands in an agony of expectation and prayer.

"*O! Marie, refuge des pecheurs*, pray for her," he said.

On a little shelf near Renee's bed stood a crucifix and an hour glass. Antoine raised his eyes and fixed them on the fast dropping sands, and then his gaze came back to the motionless face near him.

Lo! a miracle. The tense limbs had relaxed, the ashy lips had taken on a faint hue of life, the sweat had disappeared, and over the whole face was a faint flush of returning health.

Antoine remained motionless, and the mother

who had drawn near knelt down with clasped hands and eyes raised to heaven. Neither of them scarce dared to breathe as little by little the labored breath became gentle and regular, until at last there was a deep sigh and slowly the dark eyes opened and a faint voice asked for water. It was the mother who rose and placed a drinking cup to the girl's lips.

"Sleep now, *ma chère fille*," she said, her voice trembling with emotion.

With another little sigh of grateful content Renee turned over on her side, facing Antoine, and sank almost immediately into a sweet, refreshing sleep; but not before her hand had sought her betrothed's with a feeble pressure, the while her eyes smiled into his.

The dawn was breaking in the east when Antoine came out on the street, after leaving Renee, and started for home.

Had he not been blessed with a vigorous constitution he would have been exhausted, after the violent emotions and tense anxiety of the past twenty four hours. As it was, he felt singularly tired, and made all the haste he could to reach his room in a narrow court near the Cathedral, where he lodged with a goldsmith and his wife, his parents living in the country some distance beyond Rheims.

It seemed to Antoine that he had only been asleep

five mintues, though it was in reality three hours, when he was awakened by a violent knocking at his door, and started up, thinking it was the goldsmith's wife calling him for the last Mass at the Cathedral. Hastily putting on some clothes, he went to the door, and was confronted by a stout countryman, whom he recognized as a neighbor of his father's.

"Ah! *mon ami*, is it you?" said the man. "How I have knocked, and now it is bad news I must tell you."

"How, what!" said Antoine, in alarm.

"Your mother, *mon frere*," replied the countryman, she lies mortally ill; they bade me ride with all haste to summon you. I have a mare here saddled and bridled; and if you are quick you can reach your mother's bedside by sundown."

Antoine stood for a moment like one stunned. Was trouble never to end?

With a few more words between him and the man, he began hurriedly to dress, and stopping only long enough to swallow a mouthful of food and ask the goldsmith to take a message to the Mere Chocarne, he mounted the waiting horse and was soon galloping through the city and out into the country beyond.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was Monday morning in Holy Week when An-

toine left Rheims, and it was Maundy Thursday before he returned. His mother's illness had taken a favorable turn, and she was out of danger when he finally left her. It was toward evening when he rode into the city, accompanied by the countryman, who was to take back his horse.

Down the familiar, narrow streets rode Antoine, his heart full of joy. Soon he would see Renee, who, no doubt, was now sitting up, looking anxiously for his return. If Renee improved rapidly, perhaps they could be married two or three weeks after Easter if not, then in the summer.

Thus thinking, Antoine mounted the dark, narrow stairs that led up to the Mere Chocarne's rooms.

The door opening on the landing stood ajar, and far down the stairs Antoine heard a low hum of voices that made him quicken his steps. Was it Renee's voice that he heard in that low plaintive sort of chant? Doubtlessly her thoughts were turned to the solemn and tremendous sacrifice that the Church commemorated to-morrow! He ascended the last step of the stairs and reached the door, when suddenly he paused, in his heart a terrible fear that he could not analyze.

*"Requiem aeternam, dona eis, Domine: et lux perpetua luceat eis,"* chanted a solemn voice.

Like a man in a dream Antoine pushed open the

door and paused on the threshold, unobserved by anyone.

*"Absolve, Domine, animas omnium fidelium defunctorum ab omni vinculo delictorum."*

Ah, yes! Absolve all holy and faithful souls who have preceded us to the place of refreshment, light and peace. Absolve in particular her whose slender delicate form is stretched out on a bier before the eyes of her agonized lover.

Antoine stumbled into the room.

*"O mon Dieu!"* he said, and then darkness closed over him, and in spite of his strong young manhood he fell down by the side of his lost love like one dead.

\* \* \* \* \*

Again the Archbishop Hincmar sat in the sacristy, and once more there was a knock at the door, and there appeared not his secretary, but a young man with fair hair and beard. One who entered with bowed head, and heavy eyes full of grief and pain.

Many years in dealing with souls had made the Archbishop an adept in recognizing a need; and one glance showed him that here was a man in mortal agony.

Antoine advanced and knelt down before the prelate who had been his friend from childhood.

*"O! mon pere,"* he said, striking his breast, "I

have sinned; for it was I who stole the oil from the holy Ampoule," and then in a voice broken by sobs, and with many pauses, he told the story of Renee's illness, of his despair, of the theft of the Sainte Ampoule, and that he had gone away and returned to find his betrothed dead.

"She died at eight o'clock on Maundy Thursday morning," he concluded, in a dull, hopeless voice.

"She seemed to be getting well *mon pere*, but sank suddenly and died in five minutes."

At eight o'clock thought the Archbishop, the very hour when I consecrated new oil for the holy *Ampulla*. And then he turned to the stricken soul near him with words of comfort and pardon.

"My son," he finally said, "we should not expect good to come out of evil. If we are determined to have our own way it is sometimes granted to us, but it seldom brings happiness in the end. The good God, for some inscrutable reason, wanted your Renee. You wrested her from Him for a time; but the Almighty has been merciful to you in not permitting your sin to bear fruit.

"My dear son," he continued, "be comforted. She whom you love is more tenderly loved, more safely sheltered, more gloriously happy than she could ever have been even with you. Reach out to the things that are eternal. A few short years and

you will be with her again. *Pax tecum*," he concluded, making over the kneeling man the sign of the Cross. "Come to me this evening in the confessional and I will give you priestly absolution."

Then he arose, as did Antoine.

"Thank you, *mon pere*," said Antoine, in a broken voice.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is ten years later. Pere Antoine walks the narrow streets of his city of Rheims. As of yore, he climbs dark staircases and enters mean and squalid abodes; but he seeks not his own happiness now, and therefore he has found blessedness.

His work is fruitful; for the poor, the sick, the unfortunate come to him as to a father.

But it is remarked that for one class Pere Antoine has an especial tenderness: the young men and women about to be married, with a future before them to make or mar.

On such as these he pours forth all the riches of that tenderness and care with which he had once encircled his lost Renee, and which, returning to his own bosom, found a new outlet toward his poor, to whom it seemed, indeed, like the early and later rain.



## VALENTINE

## CHAPTER I.

"Will it be to-night, *mon frere*?"

The one addressed shrugged his shoulders.

"To-night, or to-morrow, or the next day, who knows?" he answered.

If a snub was intended, the younger man was not discouraged.

"And how long, think you, it will last when once the strike is declared?" he asked.

The elder man turned a sharp, almost wolfish face on the last speaker.

"How should I know?" he replied: "a month, six months, a year—it is all the same. We will starve as easily in thirty days as in three hundred and sixty-five."

"Bahl!" said the younger man. "We will not starve. We will win."

This conversation took place while the two men were rolling barrels along the wharf of the quay at Marseilles, preparatory to the departure of the ship they were loading for Algiers.

Rumors of a strike had been in the air for several days, and the ship owners were straining every

nerve to get their cargoes off before the men quit work. Hence they had engaged over a hundred strange hands of whom they knew nothing, and the younger of the two men, who were rolling barrels together, was among the number.

Antoine Dubellay, the elder man, had been a native of Marseilles all his life, with no other outlook than the poverty and hard labor that had always been his portion. He it was who had brought the younger man, Claude, to the ship's master, and they had worked together daily, lightening their labors with snatches of conversation. It was half an hour after Dubellay had given vent to his pessimistic views on the proposed strike, when the whistle to stop their work sounded; and soon the streets of Marseilles were alive with men and women on their way home. Making their way to the poorest quarter of the city, Dubellay and Claude entered a dark-looking tenement, where they shared one room together at the very top of the building.

Here they cooked, lived and slept when not at work, and here they fomented the socialistic doctrines which for two years had been growing in the city. Dubellay had been a recognized leader for some time; the younger man had only recently appeared on the scene, but had speedily become popular

with the men and women who met in the basement of Piat's wine shop, not far from the quay.

There was work to do that night, and after cooking and partaking of their scanty meal, the two men locked the door of their room, and, descending the rickety stairs, were soon on the street. A short walk brought them to the wine shop, and entering at the main door and throwing a careless nod to the proprietor behind the bar, they made their way to the back of the shop, where some enclosed stairs led down to the basement.

The place was already nearly filled when they appeared in the room, the air of which was damp, and intolerably close. Half a dozen cheap oil lamps threw a sickly glimmer on the scene. Dubellay made his way easily through the knots of men and women, followed by Claude, their appearance being greeted with enthusiasm, and soon they had taken their seats on a rough platform at the far end of the room, with half a dozen other men, evidently, like them, the leaders. In fifteen minutes the place was packed to suffocation, and Dubellay arose to make his first speech.

"Fellow-sufferers," he said, "the word has been passed along that to-morrow at noon the strike begins. When the whistles sound at twelve o'clock, every man in the employ of the shippers is expected

to quit work and to stay out until all their demands have been acceded to. Organized labor, my friends," he said, raising his voice, "is growing stronger and more compact every day. Soon the corporations and autocrats, who grind the poor till they have no life left, will meet their day of reckoning."

A voice in the crowd—it was a woman's—was here lifted up. "Who will give us bread during the strike?" she said.

"Fellow-sufferers," said Dubellay, "do you hear that voice? 'Bread!' it cries, 'bread!' Yes, bread we must have. If we spend our last cent in this strike we must storm the bakeries and take bread by force."

One speaker after another arose and addressed the meeting in the same vein, and at last it was the turn of Claude. His address was impassioned, violent and anarchic. If they could conquer in no other way, he advocated shooting the principal opponents of the strike, as well as the police and soldiery. Even burning the quay, the ships and the warehouses, he thought, would be a good idea.

The already impressionable, over-excited audience became wild under the effects of this speech, and cries of "*a bas les aristocrats!*" "Kill the demagogues!" "Terrorize the city!" and the like, rang through the hall. The meeting broke up in disorder

and the crowd began ascending the stairs to the wine shop. A tall man in the audience made his way to the platform, and taking Dubellay aside, held a whispered conversation with him; then he vanished in the fast-dissolving crowd, and Dubellay beckoned to Claude.

"*Mon Ami*," he said, "I have received orders from our chief to go to Arles to-night on important business. I may be gone a week. Meanwhile you will know how to take my place and lead the strike when once it begins."

The younger man, if anything, was pleased. He had often chafed at the elder's domination. Besides, he secretly suspected Dubellay, on more than one occasion, of a pessimism that he, Claude, was a stranger to.

Dubellay hurried away and Claude remained to talk with the ringleaders. It was nearly dawn when he got back to his room. There was no need of getting home early, he thought. There would be many days when the wharves would be deserted, labor at a standstill, and when he could sleep as much and as well as possible hunger would allow.

On the following day the strike took place at the given time, and thousands of men in Marseilles were idle. For the next two days Claude was the ring-

leader, the moving spirit, of the hundreds who flocked to hear him speak.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Chief of Police was closeted with several leaders of the maritime industry, and with two captains of regiments that had been ordered on the scene in anticipation of trouble. It was the Chief who was speaking.

"Messieurs," he said, "my secret detectives have been active in the last few days, and I have all information at hand. The two chief promoters and ringleaders in this strike are Antoine Dubellay, well known to us as a socialist and labor agitator, and one Claude Velot, a stranger in the city and suspected of being a violent anarchist. Dubellay escaped the night before the strike. He received secret information that his arrest was imminent, and cleverly got off in a sailing boat across the Mediterranean, after giving out that he was going to Arles in the interests of the strikers. Velot is in the city, stirring up the men more and more every day. If you give me the order, Messieurs," he said, "I will have him arrested."

"It seems the surest way to end the strike," said the owner of one of the largest shipping plants in Marseilles. "A little time behind prison-bars might bring the ringleaders to their senses; and once the

chief men are under lock and key, the masses will yield more easily."

"By all means," said the chief officer. "I have orders from the Government to use every legitimate means to end the trouble."

"At your service, Messieurs," said the Captain of Police. "I will give orders to my men to arrest the half dozen ringleaders as soon as possible."

He bowed as he spoke and left the room, and as the door closed the other men arose and prepared to leave. "Who is this Velot?" asked the president of the——Company, as he began putting some papers in his desk.

"No one knows," answered Captain F——. "As far as his antecedents have been traced, he has been in Marseilles only six months, but long enough to make plenty of trouble. He seems one of those spirits born to lead, and unfortunately his leading is all in the wrong direction."

"A great pity," said the president, as with one accord he and his confreres turned to leave the office where the meeting had taken place.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two weeks passed—three weeks—a month. It began to dawn on Claude that Dubellay had wilfully left him and escaped. The knowledge increased his bitterness and the half contempt he already felt for

the man. His little store of money was nearly gone, hunger had begun to gnaw him, and still the ship owners showed no sign of yielding. The trade of the seaport was almost at a standstill, and rumor had been rife that it would soon be diverted to Italian ports.

"In that case," thought Claude, sullenly, "the owners will lose as well as the men."

He sallied out that night in a desperate mood. Meeting a number of the strikers, they repaired to the basement of Piat's shop, and in an inflammatory speech Claude called upon them to use violence—to shed blood if need be.

\* \* \* \* \*

For the next two days terror reigned in Marseilles. Warehouses were burned, and police and soldiers were shot or otherwise injured while trying to quell the rioters. One of the largest ship owners in the city barely escaped with his life, on being fired at by one of the strikers. For two days Claude was in hiding, knowing that the police were actively engaged in searching for him. In the city it was believed that he had been shot in the encounter with the troops and was being taken care of by sympathizing strikers.



## CHAPTER II.

It was a week later—the city was quiet, although the men had not returned to work, when a figure might have been seen making its way, one dark night, along the deserted streets in the direction of the tenement which Dubellay and Claude called home. Arrived at the house, the man mounted the stairs cautiously, took a key from his pocket, and, entering the cheerless room, closed and locked the door. He did not strike a light, but groping his way to the straw pallet in one corner of the room, threw himself down and was soon lost in the slumber of utter exhaustion. He had been asleep perhaps two hours when he was awakened by a continuous tap, tap, tap, which at first he mistook for a rat or a mouse in the walls. But no! the sound was clearly a knock on the door. He was wide awake now—every sense alert. Could it be the police again on his track? Softly the man arose, and creeping across the room, listened; the knocking was renewed, and presently he heard a voice:

“Claude, Claude, are you within?”

“*Mon Dieu! C’est Valentin!*” said the man on the inside of the door.

He turned the key in the lock, opened the door an inch, and whispered under his breath:

"Come in softly, *mon frere*." Then the door was opened wide enough to admit the newcomer.

Closing and locking the door again, Claude drew his brother to the window, where there was only the faintest glimmer of light. So alike were the brothers, who were twins, that perhaps only their mother could easily have told them apart. It would take a nice observer to see that the expression and lines on Valentine's face differed from his brother's.

"You wonder, *mon frere*, at my caution," whispered Claude. "I am hunted, hounded." And then, without waiting to hear what Valentine might have to say, he told him all the occurrences of the past six weeks, omitting, however, to give any voice to his anarchic propaganda.

The younger twin's clear blue eyes looked at him steadily, almost mournfully, until the elder paused for breath; then he spoke.

"This is a sad state of affairs, *mon Ami*," he said, "but it makes my errand here easier. Our mother is dead, Claude. She died two weeks ago. With her dying breath she left you a message to come home."

"Our mother!" said the elder twin—and there was in his voice a tone unknown to his admirers at Piat's—"What was her sickness, my brother?"

Hurriedly, in low tones, Valentine told of the mother's last illness. For once Claude did not smile

cynically when his brother related in simple language of how the priest had been present and the last Sacraments administered.

"She grieved for you, Claude," said Valentine. "She knew you were struggling on alone in this great city. She bade me find you and tell you she had saved up a little money for us, and that you must return home and marry Barbe, who has waited for you so long."

Claude started, but did not speak.

"You can take the house," continued Valentine; "the fields yield a fair income, *mon frere*. There is enough money to buy a cow, and Barbe makes fine butter for the market."

Through Claude's brain surged a multitude of emotions. Leave Marseilles and the cause in which he was a ringleader! For the strike the man cared little; but his Socialist aims? If he left the cause, would it not brand him as a renegade among his confreres. But there was Barbe, little Barbe, and his mother's cottage at the foot of the mountains, with enough soil to give them bread. Besides, would he not soon be arrested any way, and even if he were not, was not hunger gnawing him? Was he not growing tired of his present life? Which should he choose?

"Valentine, *mon frere*," said the elder, "I know not

how I can leave—the police are on my track. They will trace me to our home and arrest me there. There is little use in my trying to get away; I am a marked man.”

But Valentine had clapped his hands softly.

“*Mon frere*,” he said, “listen; you must go—our mother wished it. It was her dying request and we cannot refuse her, Claude. She would grieve. She would not rest in peace if she knew we had disregarded her commands.”

“This very night, my brother, you must steal away. Look! I have money, and I, Valentine, will stay here in your place. If they find me and arrest me, what then? Pouf! a day, perhaps, in prison—then it blows over, and I am free. I return to my work—(your work). By and bye they forget me, the police, and I disappear from Marseilles some day, and come home!”

But Claude had started back. Some sparks of goodness in the man, latent but not lost, had at last been stirred. Valentine saw the rising objection and redoubled his efforts.

“Think of Barbe, Claude—little Barbe. How she waits for you. Her bright eyes are dimmed with tears, for she has waited so long. Ah, *mon frere*, do not delay, but go—it is now the darkest hour before the dawn. You can get across the city to the open

country in safety, and take the train at some place where you are not known."

His voice had a caressing, authoritative insistence, as of a father speaking to his child.

Claude moved across the room as in a dream.

"Very well," he said quietly, "I will go." Hastily he began doing up a bundle. Now that he had made up his mind to leave, he was in a fever to be off. Knotting the bundle, he slung it over his shoulders, buttoned up his coat, and then, feeling under his straw mattress, drew out his revolver and started for the door where his brother stood. The room was now so dark that not an object was visible. Was it because of this that Claude tripped and fell?

There was a flash and a report, then a stifled cry from Valentine. Claude was up in an instant.

"Oh! *mon frere*," he groaned, sick with horror, "I have killed you." He groped his way to the door, to be met by an outstretched hand and a firm grasp on his arm. Was it Valentine who was laughing? and oh, *merveille!* he was unhurt. The man who had not prayed for years uttered a fervent "Thank God."

"Quick, my brother," whispered Valentine, "that bullet is in the wall behind me, but you must not linger a second now; the noise of the report may bring the police if they are near."

Pressing some money in his brother's hand, Valen-

tine saw him leave the room, then closed and locked the door. Claude made his way out cautiously, and keeping within the shadow of the houses, was soon well across the city, and when dawn broke was far out in the open country. In another three hours he took a train at a wayside station and was soon speeding northward toward his home and Barbe.

### CHAPTER III.

When the door closed on Claude, Valentine fell on his knees in devout thanksgiving, then he arose, trembling and shaken. The bullet, which the brave boy had made his brother believe had missed him, had in truth passed through his arm near the shoulder. It was the left arm. Slowly and with difficulty Valentine tied it up with his handkerchief, using his teeth to help draw the knots. This stopped the flow of blood, and tired and worn out, he lay down on his brother's pallet to sleep. In his heart was perfect content. His mission had succeeded and the brother who had been confided to his care by the mother whom he had adored was saved, and on his way home to Barbe. The wound in the arm was not serious, so Valentine soon slept the sleep of one whose conscience is clear and whose hope is in God and the blessed Saints.

\* \* \* \* \*

When he awoke the sun was high in the heavens. For a moment he glanced around the cheerless room in bewilderment. Then he remembered, and for a moment he lay and considered. He must find some place where he could get food, and then, if he was unmolested, he would go to Father Jean, who lived about five miles from his native village. It was the good Pere who had promised to send him to a seminary so he could study for the priesthood.

Valentine arose and was soon ready to leave the room. His arm was stiff, but not entirely helpless, the bullet having passed through the fleshy part without injuring the bone. Having closed the window, he knelt down for a moment in prayer. He had uttered the last "*Priez pour nous*," and was making the sacred sign of salvation on forehead and breast, when suddenly the tramp, tramp of heavy feet came up the stairs.

"Stand here, Emile," said a voice, "and you, Francois, go to the foot of that ladder that leads to the roof; the fellow is armed and desperate, and we will probably have a tussle before we get him."

"Do you feel sure he is here?" inquired another voice.

"Certain," said the first speaker. "I saw him close the window five minutes ago. He is in that room unless he has escaped through the roof."

For a moment there was silence, and then came a thundering knock on the door, which was quickly opened from within—so quickly that the tall policeman, his revolver held at full cock, fell back in surprise. There stood the desperate criminal quiet, unarmed! "What do you want, Messieurs?" he said.

The police and two soldiers entered the room.

"We have a warrant for your arrest, Claude Velot," said the chief, "you are wanted on a charge of killing one of the police. The man died last night. You are known to have received that wound (touching his bandaged arm) in the encounter that resulted so fatally for our comrade."

"And further," said the officer, as Valentine remained silent, "there is another indictment against you as a plotter against the government, a stirrer up of sedition, and a frequenter of Piat's wine shop, where all sorts of dangerous plots are hatched."

Valentine raised one hand to his bewildered head, and simultaneously the two soldiers levelled their guns at him. This very quiet man was liable to make a sudden and desperate move.

"Lower your guns, Messieurs," said Valentine, "I will go with you."

He submitted to be handcuffed without any comment. Afterward one of the soldiers—a man of



finer instincts than the others—remembered the strange far-away look in his eyes. The officer locked the door and put the key in his pocket, and soon the little procession was moving quickly through the streets, being reinforced by more police, who feared an attempt on the part of the strikers to rescue their comrade. By noon Valentine was behind prison bars.

\* \* \* \* \*

“The man is very ill,” said the prison doctor, “blood poison from his wounded arm has set in. He must be removed at once to the hospital.”

It was a month after Valentine’s arrest. He had been brought up for trial, accused of murder, and convicted of manslaughter. A dozen witnesses were produced who swore they saw him fire the shot that resulted in the death of the policeman, Arnaud.

His sentence was imprisonment for life. He was led back to his cell and the next morning his jailer found him partly unconscious and in a high fever. The boy had borne his trial and conviction, the increasing pain in his arm, and the loneliness of his prison existence without a word of complaint. Nor did he in any way give his judges an inkling of the true state of the case. Was it not for his mother and Barbe?

The white-capped sister in the hospital thought

the terrible anarchist was strangely gentle and submissive; and then, too, he seemed so grateful for all she did, though his suffering increased daily. The doctors shook their heads, and the rumor began to spread through the city that Velot, the noted anarchist, was dying. This was the news that greeted a white-haired, dignified old priest, who alighted from the train at Marseilles a week after Valentine's removal from the prison. Where was he, this Velot? And on learning his whereabouts from a dozen interested spectators who crowded around him and would have asked questions if he had not gently put them aside, the old priest hurried to the hospital.

The sisters readily admitted him, and he was soon walking through the long ward to a corner of the room where Valentine lay screened from view.

"Pere Jean!"

The priest laid his hand on the boy's head as he bent over him, and whispered in his ear; then he turned to the waiting nun.

"I will see him alone' Sister," he said, "and hear his confession; then I will call you if anything is needed."

The nun withdrew, and Pere Jean knelt down close to the dying man. His experienced eyes showed him, as well as if he had been a physician, how near the end was.

Very simply Valentine made his confession. When it was over, the priest raised his head and arranged the pillows more comfortably. He knew how the boy's heart was yearning to hear of his twin brother.

"*Mon Pere*," said Valentine, "I can die happy, now that you are here. Tell me," he said, "of Claude and little Barbe."

"I married them yesterday morning, my son," said the priest. "Your brother made his confession on the eve of his marriage. He begged me to come and find you. He was getting anxious because I had heard nothing from you, and you had not come home."

"Pere Jean," said Valentine, "they must never know—Claude and Barbe, and the people here—they think I am Claude. Do not deceive them, *mon Pere*. If they knew about Claude, they would go in search of him and put him in prison for life, and then little Barbe's heart would break."

"I will never tell them, my son," said the priest.

Valentine turned his head, and for a moment a troubled look came in his eyes. "Will they let you take me home, *mon Pere*, and bury me in the little churchyard, or must I stay here?"

"You shall go home my little Valentine," said the old priest, and his eyes were dim. It was not the man, Valentine, he seemed to see, but the boy who

summer and winter had walked over the fields and through the same churchyard where now he yearned to be buried, to serve his Mass.

"*Mon Pere—le bon—Dieu—*has been so good! —It would have—been so——hard to be in prison and now—I can go—home!"

Reverently Pere Jean recited the office for a departing soul, and like a tired child, safe in its father's arms, Valentine closed his eyes in their eternal sleep.

## A MADONNA OF THE CASA GRANDE.

"Bring the light nearer, Jose."

"A moment, señor. I will go for more candles."

The man departed noiselessly, and in the dim light the first speaker continued to shovel earth out of a deep hole in the far end of a small, low-ceilinged room. A solitary candle burned on a square, roughly made table near by; otherwise the room was bare. The walls, plastered with adobe clay, were unornamented save on the side of the room furthest from where the silent worker continued to shovel earth; here, about five feet from the ground, hung a large crucifix, black with age, but showing the delicate carving of some master hand. The light in the candle flickered, and presently a ringing, metallic sound broke the stillness.

"Ah!" and the man paused. Surely the earth was about to give up its treasure.

Jose was returning, descending from an upper floor with hurried, cautious tread, as of one bent on silence and secrecy; and yet the only other occupants of the house in that wide waste of what is now Arizona were a boy of fifteen and a girl of seventeen, both of whom were presumably asleep.

Jose put three copper candlesticks on the table and, sticking lighted candles in them, turned with an air half defiant and half apologetic.

"The chapel candles," he said. "There were no others, Senor Fernando."

But the older man did not hear, or if he did, paid no attention.

"Quick, Jose," he said; "how slow you are! Bring a light over here."

The Mexican obeyed, and standing near the yawning hole in the corner, held his light aloft. It shone full on the excavation as Fernando Ornelas rapidly shovelled out a few more spadefuls of earth.

"It is a box," he said presently, "and too large to lift. Fetch a rope, Jose, and we will have it out in a moment."

The patient Mexican was gone again, but this time came back immediately with a stout rope. Under his master's direction he descended into the excavation and fastened it securely to the heavy iron handles at each end of the box. A few strong tugs from the two men and the treasure was loosened from the surrounding earth; one more pull and it was raised from its hiding-place of a century and deposited on the bare earthen floor above.

"So!" said the elder man. "The Padre's documents did not tell me wrong."

"But they were stolen papers, senor," answered the Mexican.

The first speaker snapped his fingers and laughed.

"What of that?" he said. "If I had not taken the papers, Jose, someone else would. As it was, I—well—I only profited by them."

Jose crossed himself. His conscience was easy about such small pecadilloes as taking candles and candlesticks from the sacristy to make more light in an emergency; but stolen church property, even though it had been a century buried, was another thing.

Ah! well, he thought, at least the work was not his. He had but obeyed his master's orders, on whose shoulders would rest all responsibility.

Right and wrong had long ceased to trouble the elder man, whose dark, handsome face was bent over the box examining the lock, which he finally decided must be forced. A few swift blows from a hatchet of curious Mexican workmanship, and the cover flew up, revealing to the eagerly expectant gaze of the onlookers a thin sheet of copper that just fitted the box.

The lean, brown hands of the Spaniard, instinct with haste and nervous force, lifted this inner cover. Inside was something in numerous wrappings, the latter made of a substance so thick and strong and in

such a good state of preservation that Ornelas, for all his impatience, wondered what secret had preserved them from decay. A moment more and the last fold of cloth was removed, and both men uttered an exclamation.

The light shone full on the contents of the chest, that seemed to catch all the radiance that candle-light could give, sending back an additional effulgence of light. No Mexican dollars here—no hoard long buried—but a veritable treasure of Holy Church. Carefully, and with aid from the Mexican, Fernando Ornelas lifted from its resting place a figure of the Madonna made out of ivory and gold, and placed it upon the table.

The statue was about four feet high and of exquisite design. The face, of ivory, delicately carved and chiseled, was turned slightly upward. The hood that covered the head and fell down over the shoulders was of gold, and so was the crown that rested lightly on the ivory whiteness of the forehead, and that seemed like filigree, so fine was the workmanship. The ivory hands, clasped in prayer, were perfect, even to the delicately outlined nails, while the long, graceful lines of the gold robe, ornamented around the border with a pattern in fine tracery, fell away from a figure that expressed noble dignity and sorrow in every line. Something of its spiritual



beauty, as well as the soft loveliness of the divinely chiseled face, appealed to the Mexican, dimly, perhaps, and not understood; but greed and avarice were the only emotions that moved the Spaniard.

Here was gold, and gold worth almost the price of a king's ransom.

Who had made it, and where had the gold come from? The latter question, so Ornelas guessed, was easy to answer. The room in which they stood was part of the Casa Grande, standing in the Gila Valley, a few hundred miles above Sonora, Mexico, the borderland of which joined what is now Arizona. The whole region abounded in gold and copper. The Casa, built of cajon or pise, was so old in the sixteenth century that no one knew when it had been erected. Discovered by an expedition from Mexico, tradition said that Mass had been offered within its walls. Rediscovered in the seventeenth century by Padre Kino, and visited in the eighteenth century by Padre Font, it was, in 1697, when our story opens, inhabited by Fernando Ornelas, a gentleman who had fled from Spain to Mexico, and thence, wandering northward, had taken possession of the empty Casa, accompanied by his daughter, and young son.

Utterly lonely as the place was, the Casa standing grand and solitary in the general waste, they were not entirely cut off from the society of their own

kind. As early as 1687 the Jesuits had established missions and schools in the country, and for the past three years Juan Ornelas had been sent for several months every winter to one of these schools further south, while four times a year one of the Padres visited the region and gathered the scattered inhabitants together for Mass and instruction. Whatever it was that had brought Fernando Ornelas to that wild, desolate region, he guarded his secret well. Certainly his children did not know. To the Padres the man was outwardly civil, though he never sought them for confession, or the Eucharist.

Presuming, therefore, that the statue had been made from gold found in Sonora, the most natural supposition was that it was the work of someone, perhaps a priest, versed in the art of fashioning church vessels and other things out of gold and silver. That it had been buried over a hundred years ago in the exact position where it was unearthed, Ornelas had discovered from some Church documents that he had found in the Casa a week ago—papers which Jose regarded as stolen property.

What was the secret that had brought the Spaniard to the lonely Casa? In his wandering career he had spent two years in Sonora, until, in a quarrel, he had dangerously wounded his adversary. Not waiting to learn the result, he fled northward with the two

children and, finding the Casa empty and deserted, but well roofed in, solidly built, and habitable, he had taken possession. The loneliness of the place suited him. As to the children, they had each other, and with some inherent poetic sense that must have come to them from their mother, as the father was wholly material, they speedily learned to glory in the beauty of their surroundings. The fertile Gila Valley, backed by the lofty range of mountains of the same name; the wonderful sunsets that flamed now red, now pearly gray and violet across the far-off horizon as they wandered through the canyons hand in hand, or sent their little canoe shooting down the river—all formed a picture that was new and beautiful to them, and in the clear, dry air of the region they grew and developed, oblivious of the great world they had left, and which they hardly remembered. Save for the Mexican, Jose, who cooked and did the work of the house, and an Indian who tilled the fields, they saw no one save their taciturn father and the Padre who came four times a year to say Mass in the chapel of the Casa.

It was the Padre who had prevailed on Ornelas to let Juan go back with him to the mission school, and he it was who, arriving at the Casa one spring day, a few months after they had taken possession, mounted on a stout burro and leading another heavily laden

with furnishings for the chapel, had shown Inez how to arrange the altar and the boy how to serve his Mass. That was five years ago, when Juan was ten and Inez twelve, and partly to please his daughter and partly to divert suspicion from himself, Ornelas had raised no objections, and the chapel was now as complete in its appointments as anything so far removed from civilization could be.

Inez was now seventeen, and her brother, who was just home from the mission school, was two years her junior. Left alone with his daughter for five or six months every winter, Ornelas had become her instructor, so that the girl, who had been to school in Mexico at different periods, was fairly well educated.

Like many another steeped in wickedness, Ornelas kept all knowledge of his sins from his children. Twice a year when Juan was home to keep his sister company, the Spaniard took Jose with him and departed on some unknown business which kept him away for a month or six weeks. At such times the Indian brought his squaw to live at the Casa, and the two formed the children's only protection. More pious protectors, perhaps, than the father, for both had been brought up in Mexico, and were Catholics; devoted, moreover, to the gentle, dark-eyed girl and her brother. The country, although lonely, was com-

paratively safe, the Amerind people of the region having been more or less civilized by the influence of the Jesuit missions.

## CHAPTER II.

It seemed to Ornelas afterward that he had only been looking at the Madonna for a few moments when the intense silence of the outer night was broken. There was the noise of horse's hoofs, and then a call, clear, musical and sonorous, from a voice of peculiarly fine timbre and quality.

Like a flash the Spaniard was aroused to action.

"Quick, Jose," he whispered. "Hide the Madonna somewhere and fill up this hole. I will go out and see who is coming so as to give you time."

He disappeared as he spoke, and Jose, lifting the heavy statue in his powerful arms, ascended the steep stairs rapidly. He was back in a few moments, and throwing the empty box in the hole, proceeded to shovel in the earth, making hardly a sound, though the dirt flew through the air in enormous masses. It took the Mexican perhaps not more than two or three minutes to fill up the excavation and stamp down the earth with his bare feet. As a final precaution he moved the table over the spot to hide from a too observant eye that the floor had been

disturbed. The shovel and candles were also removed, and only then did the man pause in his work. A moment later he was outside of the Casa and had joined his master at the door of the rough building, two hundred feet from the house, that did duty as a stable.

Jose, a lover of horses, eyed with appreciation the magnificent animal that stood pawing the ground and arching its head proudly, though the foam that appeared on its flank from under the Mexican' saddle showed that it had been ridden far and fast.

"Shall I take the senor's horse?" he said.

"Ah! it is you, Jose," answered Ornelas; and then, turning to his guest—"We can leave your steed now, senor. My man is used to horses, and will take good care of yours. Come indoors, and you shall have a bottle of the Padre's best wine, made in this country, and as fine as any Old-World vintage; and then to bed, senor, and to sleep, for the rest of the night."

"Faith," said the young man, "you honor me, Senor Ornelas, though the tale of your hospitality has reached almost to Sonora."

He followed his host into the house, and soon they were in a room of the Casa where Ornelas placed wine and food before his guest.

"You will find our service rude," he said, as the newcomer ate and drank heartily. "Jose is a good

cook, but the refinements and graces of court life are wanting, senor."

"It was to get away from court life that I came to this country," answered the other. "Sooner or later it becomes a weariness to the spirit. On these free, open, spaces, and in sight of your grand mountains and stupendous canyons, there is the true breath of life."

"You are young to feel so," answered Ornelas. "For myself, I am old and have lived many lives, and tired of all but this. Besides," he added, "it is usually only when the world is tired of you, or has used you badly, that you tire of it yourself."

"Padre F——has still another view," said the younger man, thoughtfully. "Supernatural grace, he says, is what enables us to give up the gay and civilized world when all it holds is most alluring."

"Ah!" Ornelas shrugged his shoulders. "So you are not only the Jesuit's emissary, but their apt pupil as well?"

The dark eyes of the handsome youth opposite lost their thoughtful expression, and turned to his host with a sparkle of amused toleration.

"So!" he said. "You do not believe, Senor Ornelas. Perhaps you have not been so fortunate as I. Yes, I am the Jesuit's pupil, and good masters they have

been. They know how to train the heart as well as the head."

"But they are severe," said Ornelas, with another shrug.

"To themselves, yes," was the answer; "to their pupils never unnecessarily so."

"*Por Dios!* I speak of what I know."

He put down his glass as he spoke, and pushed back his chair from the table. Mindful of his duties as a host, Ornelas took up a candle and lit it.

"*Muy bien,*" he said. "It waxes late, Senor de Terrazas—or rather early for the dawn will soon be breaking. You have eaten well, you say. Now you must sleep well."

He preceded his guest up the stairs, and down a long hall to a room at its extreme end; then, with a final "*Buenas noches, senor,*" he closed the door, and turning quickly, retraced his way toward the stairs to meet Jose, whom he now heard ascending.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Inez! Inez! What was that?"

"I heard nothing, Juan," answered a sleepy voice, "It must be the wind."

"But it is not the wind, *Cara mia*—listen—there it is again. It is a voice, Inez, and horse's hoofs, too."



A slender, white-robed figure emerged from the door of a sleeping apartment, and encountered the first speaker, who was her brother, dressed, and standing in the hall. The young girl on rising had thrown a long, loose white robe around her; on her feet were Indian mocassins, while her dark hair hung down her back in dusky splendor. The soft brown eyes, still half asleep, and delicate oval face flushed with a warm glow of color, made up a lovely picture. It was such a face as hers that Murillo must have seen somewhere when he painted his Madonna's.

"Come to the window in my room," said the boy. "It looks out toward the *establo*, Inez. We will soon see who it is."

Eagerly the two pressed against the narrow window, set so deep in the stone that had not the stable been directly on a line with it, they could hardly have seen the two men, one of whom they made out to be their father, standing talking near the low out-building.

"Hark!" said Inez, suddenly. "Surely, Juan, that was a noise in the chapel." She was wide awake now. Every sense alert. The chapel, her own special care! Who could be there at that hour when her father, and she supposed Jose, were both outdoors?

Quickly she left the room and sped down the hall,

her brother following close in her wake. Reaching the stairs, they turned at right angles down a narrow passage. At the end was another hall that ran parallel to the first one on which the sleeping rooms opened. Opposite to them, at the end of the narrow connecting passage, was a door, the only one in the long expanse of adobe wall. Quickly the young girl threw it open, and simultaneously the two entered.

“Juan!”

“Inez!”

Through the narrow windows, set high in the walls, a flood of moonlight shone resplendent, lighting up the bare walls and causing the cross on the altar to shine like molten gold. But it was not on these that the brother and sister were gazing transfixed. On the left side of the sanctuary, close to a window, through which came a stream of silvery light, was a small wooden altar to the Blessed Mother. How many times had not Inez dusted the simple statue of the Madre that was made of wood, and had been painted by some dead and gone Padre or Brother with loving care. This image had disappeared, and that on which her dark, startled eyes were now gazing was another Madre—regal, queenly and beautiful. Was it the moonlight that made the robes that fell away from her graceful, beseeching figure

shimmer like gold? No, gold it must really be, for the same silvery light brought out the ivory whiteness of the upturned face under its delicate, shining crown; the fairness of the slender hands that were clasped in prayer—that prayer, ever new, ever old, for the sin of the world—the world that rejected the Divine Son!

Inez scarcely breathed. All her soul went out to this beautiful pleading Madre. Was it a dream, a vision, or was it really the Blessed Mother—and if not, was it perchance a statue, and how came it there?

Involuntarily the brother and sister, who had fallen on their knees on first entering the chapel, arose and advanced across the empty, silent chapel toward the shrine. Now at last they were close to the lovely, shining figure, and saw it for what it was.

Inez drew a long breath of ecstatic wonder and admiration as she marked every detail of beauty in the marvellous figure before her. Young as she was, and unskilled in art, she knew instinctively that she was looking on something that only genius could have produced. Again the two knelt in prayer. They longed to discuss what they had seen, to question each other as to how it came there, so presently they arose and, passing out of the chapel, Inez with one backward look, closed the door, and, warned by

a distant sound that her father and his guest were now in the house, she hurried through the corridors to her room.

In a few moments she was joined by her brother, and quickly they arrived at the conclusion that the newcomer they had seen in the courtyard had brought the statue with him, though how it had been so soon set up in the chapel seemed a problem.

"The Padre will tell us all about it when he comes, Juan," said Inez; "and now you must go back to your room and to bed."

With a few more words the brother and sister parted, and were sound asleep before Ornelas brought his guest upstairs.

\* \* \* \* \*

"You put the statue in a safe place, Jose?"

"Si, senor. I took it to the chapel, and stood it up on the Blessed Mother's altar. I knew no one would go there before we could come back for it."

"That was well, Jose. Now we must put it away in some safe hiding place until I can make arrangements to melt the gold."

"The little dark closet on the floor above," said Jose. "It has a stout door, which I can fasten, senor, so that no one can enter."

Ornelas thought a moment, standing at the head

of the stairs on the second floor of the Casa, where he had met the Mexican after leaving his newly arrived guest.

"The plan is a good one," he said. "I know of no better hiding-place myself. Follow me, Jose. Between us we can carry it to the floor above; and then to bed for a few hours' sleep, for indeed I am weary."

"The senor forgets," said the Mexican proudly. "I carried the Madonna up here alone. One more flight will be nothing to Jose. I will carry the statue and you, senor, can go before and open the closet door."

Something like a smile flitted across Ornelas' dark, swarthy face. It was not the first time that the Mexican had shown he was proud of his strength.

Quickly the Spaniard passed down the corridor toward the chapel. He had blown out his candle on leaving de Terrazas but he handed it to his companion, who struck a flint and re-lit it.

The chapel door was reached and, closely followed by Jose, Ornelas paused for a moment before entering. Was it the greed of avarice, telling him that now he was to behold again the gold which meant so much wealth—or was it some unknown spell, cast by that wonderful face and figure, which made

him throw open the door and stride forward with hurried, impatient tread?

The next moment he started back with an exclamation. The statue was gone!

### CHAPTER III.

"You are sure you saw a statue, or what looked like a statue, in the chapel, Inez, and you say it was there when you and Juan went back to your rooms?"

"Ah! *Padre mio*, I saw it plainly, and so did Juan. It was beautiful, beautiful. If it was a vision, and not a statue, as it seemed to be, then it was the most wonderful vision in the world."

Inez had described the Madonna minutely, had told how she and Juan came to be up and in the chapel at night, and that rising soon after daybreak, she had gone alone to the chapel again, only to find (as her father already knew) that the statue had disappeared. The marvel of it almost exceeded her powers of description, but she found an interested and attentive listener in de Terrazas; her father and Jose had listened with assumed surprise to her story, and the former even discouraged her enthusiasm, assuring her it was a dream or an illusion.

The morning passed quickly, and early in the

afternoon Inez and her brother started to walk to a distant canyon, accompanied by their guest.

Only then did Ornelas relax the tension under which he had been laboring for twelve hours. He summoned Jose, and together they searched the Casa from end to end; but the quest was fruitless—the Madonna had disappeared as completely as if it had taken wings.

Jose's evident surprise and terror when, on entering the chapel, they had found the image gone, was too genuine to allow any suspicion to rest upon him. Besides, Ornelas knew the man had been in the stable the whole time after he and de Terrazas entered the Casa, and any doubts that he had not put the statue in the chapel were dispelled when Inez came down to breakfast in the morning full of what she had seen.

It had suited Ornelas to pretend ignorance of the whole matter, and to order Jose to do the same; hence it was only from their guest, Ignacio de Terrazas, that Inez and her brother had met with any sympathy in their recital. Completely baffled, Ornelas was at last obliged to give up his search. Jose, who had not, like his master, lost all faith in supernatural things, crossed himself, and thought uneasily of the blessed candles he had taken from the sacristy. Had not the young Senor de Terrazas

arrived there to say that Padre F——would be with them in a week to celebrate Mass, and did not the Padre always expect him, Jose, to make his yearly confession at this time! His own share in what had occurred was disquieting. What would the Padre think of it if he told all?

Guessing what was in the man's mind, Ornelas followed him from the house.

"Not a word of this to the Padre, Jose," he said sternly. "We will search again until we find the Madonna, then we will share the gold; but if you tell the Padre, I will run you through with my sword."

With a scared look the Mexican promised.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Do you never wish to see the great world, Senorita Inez?" he said. "Your life here, it is so lonely. Think of the cathedrals, the beautiful church ceremonies, the balls and court functions, and the bull fights of Spain. All these the Church in its splendor and the world in its greatness, can give."

"I would like to have Mass oftener," she said simply. "But our little chapel—I love it as I might not love some grand cathedral. As to the world, Senor, I was five years old when my father brought us from Spain. I hardly remember even the cities



of Mexico. Here I am happy and contented, though when Juan goes to the Padre's school it is lonely."

"But the world," he persisted, "the gay world of laughter and music and song. Women of your rank are not often found in a solitary waste like this; and the world is very beautiful, Senorita." To his heart he said "And so are you."

She glanced up at him, and then beyond.

"Look," she said. "Is anything you know in the cities like that?"

He had been facing her, his back to the west. Now, he turned, and uttered a low exclamation. The artistic sense, inherent in every Spaniard when not corrupted by dissipation or worldliness, responded instantly to the scene before him, and Inez, watching his face, was satisfied.

They had climbed up a narrow trail over the mountains, and, reaching a broad plateau, had paused. Westward the sun had set behind a spur of the mountains, and now, suddenly, the after-glow had risen like a flame. North and south it stretched, rising higher and higher and deepening in splendor. Soft clouds in the sky overhead took on innumerable rosy tints, while far to the south the horizon changed to delicate azure and pearly gray. The river below shone like molten gold, and even the dark canyons caught some of the glowing color of the sky. There

was no sound, not even the call of one bird to another. Nature, magnificent in its solitary grandeur, seemed to say: "I alone among earthly things am man's best friend. Those who learn to love me have found that which comes next to divine consolation."

"Have you got anything like it in your cities, Senor?" she said. "This"—she swept her little hand, describing a circle on the horizon—"this is home to me. I am never lonely here, and I am quite sure I would never want to leave it altogether."

"You are right, Senorita Inez," he said; "the great world has no beauty like this."

They turned to continue their ascent just as a shout far off was borne down to them, causing a quickening of their steps. Juan, fleet and sure of foot, was coming down the mountain-side, bounding from rock to rock, with his dog in full chase.

"The Padre, Inez," he called, "the Padre."

"Padre F——!" they both exclaimed. "At last!"

It was over a week since de Terrazas had come to the Casa. Padre F— had been expected for twenty-four hours, and it was partly in the hope of meeting him that Inez, her brother, and Ignacio de Terrazas had started out on their evening walk. The Padre's journey brought him across the plains, but a short cut over a spur of the mountains diminished the length of his trip by ten miles, and knowing this, the young people had taken that route.

Presently the priest appeared, mounted on a patient burro, and followed by three other mules, one used as a pack horse, and the remaining two carried his Indian guides from the mission. A few moments more and he was with them. Inez and her companion knelt for a moment to receive his blessing; then they arose, and while Ignacio walked beside the head of the mule, the young girl on the other side entered into an animated conversation with the priest, whom she had known and loved since she was twelve years old. She saw before her a tall, spare figure in a shabby black soutane; a broad-brimmed hat of Mexican straw shaded a dark, Spanish face, while the eyes that met hers were penetrating and sombre, except when he smiled. An observer would have wondered how so refined a man, and one whose look and brow bespoke intellectual power, came to be living in that wilderness, unpeopled save by Indians and a few settlers, did he not know that such has been the history the world over of the followers of that perfect spiritual knight, Ignatius Loyola.

The Casa was reached just as twilight was descending over the valley and plains. Ornelas, who had received many benefits from the hands of the priest, made him welcome. De Terrazas, who had spent most of the previous week scouring the surrounding

country on his horse, had given notice to the scattered Amerinds to be present at Mass the next day; the day of the Padre's arrival, the thirteenth, being the latest date at which he had said he would reach the Casa.

Inez' preparations were therefore complete. The little chapel was ready, and wearied by his long journey, Padre F——retired early, being soon followed by the other members of the household.

\* \* \* \* \*

Fernando Ornelas had slept perhaps four hours when he awoke. Was it the wind, seeming to presage a storm, or was it the restlessness of his mind, that made a long, refreshing sleep impossible? He arose and looked out of the window; the waning moon had just risen over the distant mountain, throwing a strange, unnatural light over the landscape. The man stood for a moment in deep thought. How passing strange that the Madonna had disappeared, when he knew not a soul was in, or anywhere near, the Casa that night save his own household. That anyone from within had taken it seemed impossible. Who was there to do it? His guest? He had himself taken him direct from his repast to his sleeping room, and had gone straight to the chapel after leaving him. His children? He knew he could

trust them absolutely, and of Jose he felt very sure also.

How, then, explain the mystery? The man's rugged constitution, his strong nerves, and above all his skepticism, scouted the idea of the supernatural—and yet—had not strange miracles happened in the history of Holy Church to convince an unbelieving world? Involuntarily he shivered, then turned with a start. A light footfall was coming toward his room.

"Senor!"

"Jose!"

"I could not sleep, senor, the wind on my side of the house is worse than it is here. I think the Madre is angry with us, senor."

Ornelas shrugged his shoulders.

"In that case, Jose, we had better look for the Madonna again. Come with me to the chapel, and we will have another search."

"But senor, we have looked and looked, and there is nothing there, nothing, not even a closet."

Ornelas had turned again to the window. "The wind has unfastened the door of the *establo*," he said, "and it is blowing back and forth. You had better go and shut it, Jose, and then come to me in the chapel."

"*Si, senor*," said Jose, as he disappeared.

Left alone, Ornelas dressed quickly; then taking a lighted candle, he made all haste for the chapel. An unnatural, feverish anxiety possessed him. Solve the mystery he must; there would be no rest for him, he knew, until the Madonna was found. Arriving at the chapel, he crossed the floor to the Blessed Virgin's shrine and placed the candle on one end of the altar. It was made of wood, and like the one to St. Joseph on the other side of the chapel, was about four feet high by three feet wide. The top had a round pedestal about two feet in diameter. It was on top of this pedestal, made of wood like the rest of the altar, that Jose told Ornelas he had placed the statue, a fact that was confirmed by Inez and Juan. Ornelas sighed and leaned heavily against the wall. The air of the little chapel was sweet with the flowers that his daughter had placed there before retiring. Everything was ready for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice in the morning, but it brought no peace to his soul.

Abstractedly he put one hand in his pocket and then withdrew it. At the same time a slight sound broke the absolute stillness, and looking down he saw that a silver coin had fallen from his pocket, and rolled away between the altar and the adjoining wall.

Bending down he reached forward to pick it up,

but the coin had become lodged in a crevice, and with one hand on the wall, Ornelas spent several seconds trying to pick up the silver before he succeeded and arose from his stooping position, just as the chapel door opened and Jose entered. The light on the altar suddenly burned low, then flared up brightly. Master and man at one and the same moment uttered an astonished exclamation.

For, lo! a miracle! There, standing on the pedestal the slender hands joined in prayer, the delicately carved face lifted heavenward, the golden robes and crown shimmering and sparkling in the light thrown upward by the candle below, was the lost Madonna.

Jose was on his knees in an instant, repeating *Ave* after *Ave*, and frantically beating his breast, moved apparently more by fear than devotion. Ornelas experienced, for perhaps the first time in his worldly, hardened life, a sickening feeling that he could not define. Only for a few moments, however. Here was the Madonna at last—it mattered not how. It was here, and that meant thousands of shining gold coin. The man gazed and gazed, and every moment his avarice and cupidity increased. His mind moved rapidly, and in a short time his plans were made.

“Jose, stop that praying and come here.”

The Mexican arose and advanced, trembling in every limb.

"Jose," whispered Ornelas, "listen; the Padre must not see this. Go and saddle Sancho and Panza at once. I will ride from here to-night and take the Madonna with me. You know where to, Jose. In a week I will return. In the morning you can tell them a message came for me at night, and I had to go."

Jose's teeth were chattering.

"Senor, I implore you, do not go, the Madre is angry. Harm will come to you if you take the statue again. Listen, senor, to the wind; the spring storm is coming."

Ornelas uttered an oath.

"Fool," he said, "do as I bid you, and then come and help me carry the Madonna down stairs. We will pack it on Panza, and I will ride Sancho. Go, now, at once."

Without a word the Mexican went.

He was back in fifteen minutes, and together they carried the statue downstairs. Carefully Ornelas wrapped it up, and strapped it on Panza's broad back. A hurried trip to his room completed his preparations, and in half an hour he was ready to start. He slipped a coin into the Mexican's open palm, and with one hand on Sancho's bridle, and the other leading Panza, he rode out into the night.

His course led through one of the canyons—in



reality a river's bed, which during the rare but heavy rains became a broad water course, at other times being dry and making a safe road.

On and on he journeyed through the dark night. The animals were fresh, and inclined to respond to his urging that they hasten. Now, they were going at a gallop; there were still many miles to traverse before they could get out of the canyon, shut in on each side by stupendous cliffs. The farther they went the higher the wind rose and at last, just as the day dawned, the storm Jose had predicted broke in all its fury. Doggedly the man pressed forward; there was no turning back now, no avenue of escape. Up on the mountains the rain was descending in torrents; now it has reached the canyon. For miles and miles, north and south, it swept through the narrow defile like a cloudburst. Struggling with all his might against the wind, Ornelas still retained his hold of Panza's bridle until a slight bend in the canyon brought them into what seemed like a raging torrent. The water was up to the animal's flanks, and suddenly a stronger gust of wind obliged the Spaniard to let go his hold of Panza, who, free of the guiding hand that had so long held him, turned with the flood, and in a moment was swept southward in the direction whence they had come.

With a cry of despair—a cry that went echoing

above and beyond the lonely, storm-swept cliffs—Ornelas tightened his hold on Sancho's bridle—of what use to him now was the gold of a thousand Madonnas?

## CHAPTER IV.

It was eight o'clock, and Mass in the little chapel was over. The storm, which had been raging since four o'clock, was now rapidly subsiding, and Inez, coming out of the chapel door, saw a stream of sunshine through one of the narrow windows. Peace filled her heart; for had not she and her brother (who had served the Padre's Mass), as well as de Terrazas, Jose, and the half-dozen Indians who had been present, assisted with devotion at the Holy Sacrifice? To be sure, her father was not there, but he very seldom consented to be present, so this one cloud on her horizon was not new. Descending the stairs, she met Jose. The man looked pale through his swarthy skin, and his eyes were like those of one who had not slept.

"Senorita," he said, and stopped.

"What is it, Jose?"

"Oh! senorita," the man said, and then his words came in a torrent, and incoherent though they were, the young girl quickly made out the situation. Her

father, all alone, had ridden forth at two o'clock last night—had walked right into the teeth of the furious storm and through the canyon—the one route that she knew was full of deadly peril.

Inez understood perfectly.

"Call the Padre and Senor de Terrazas and my brother, Jose," she said.

They were all with her in a moment, and a plan was quickly formed. Some breakfast they must all have, and then they would set out on their search. Another hour found them all on the way, mounted on burros, with Jose and the Indian boys who had accompanied the Padre from the mission running on ahead.

In half an hour they reached the mountains, and another half hour over the trail they had traversed the day before brought them by a rapid descent to a narrow path which suddenly turned sharply around the corner of a huge boulder, and seeing what was before her, Inez uttered a cry of despair. From out of the mouth of the canyon, right before them, flowed a deep torrent, level with the ground, and rapidly overflowing it. Swiftly the water ran onward in its narrowed bed to where, some miles below, it would empty into the river. They saw at a glance that to progress in their search was a sheer impossibility. To climb the rough, impassible cliff, and walk for

any distance along its summit with the hope of looking down into the canyon below, was equally out of the question.

A sudden shout from Jose startled them.

"Senorita! senorita!" he said, "the Madonna!"

Inez sprang from her burro before de Terrazas could help her, and together they ran forward, followed by Juan and the Padre. Quickly they reached the canyon, where Jose and the Indian boys were bending over, examining some shining object that seemed half covered with mud and debris. There was a flash of gold in the sunlight, an exclamation from the Padre, and Inez, her eyes blinded with the tears shed for her father, saw the Mexican lift the statue and plunge it into the eddying waters—once, twice, three times—till the soft mud and debris was washed off. Then with a rapid glance that took in a smooth rock near by, that seemed made for a pedestal, Jose carried the statue across the intervening space and stood it up, perfect, uninjured, beautiful, marvellously preserved in the mad rush of the waters.

How had it come there? asked the Padre, and many other questions as well, and then Jose spoke. Standing within sound of the swirling waters, with the little company before him grave, attentive, awe-struck, the Mexican told of how he and Ornelas had dug into the ground within the Casa; of the strange

disappearance of the Madonna and its still stranger return; of Ornelas' flight with the statue the preceding night, and his own fears for his safety. Some instinctive desire to spare his young mistress pain prevented Jose from telling of the master's intention to convert the statue into gold. That was reserved for the Padre's ear afterward.

The Jesuit took command of the situation. The Madonna was to be mounted on one of the mules and conveyed back to the Casa; Jose and the Indians were to stay by the canyon till nightfall, and then to report to him if the waters began to go down. In the meantime the rest of the party would return home and be ready to render Ornelas all possible care in case the Mexican and Indians found him.

And so the Madonna returned to the roof that had sheltered her for over a century, and later—in the darkening twilight—to the sound of the low, monotonous chant of the Indian boys, all that was mortal of the man who had wrested her from her hiding-place was borne back to the Casa, to be in his turn laid away in the dark, cool earth.

When Inez' first crushing sorrow was succeeded by a resigned calm, and she was preparing to leave the Casa and proceed southward to some friends of her mother's in Mexico, the Padre sought her with an explanation of the wonderful mystery of the past week.

"Like many strange things, Senorita Inez," he said, "it was all very simple. I suspected that the iron box, which had held the Madonna for so long, would reveal the secret. Under my direction Jose dug it up again, and in the bottom, overlooked by your father, was a flat copper box, in which we found a paper giving the Madonna's history, and among other things it told us that the inside of the Blessed Virgin's altar could be used as a secret hiding-place. By pressing a spring out in the hall near the window, the top of the pedestal on which the Madonna rested would descend quickly and noiselessly inside the altar, and a false top would spring into place. Then, in order to bring the statue up again, another spring, set in the wall between the altar and the window, had to be pressed. All this was what happened. When you and your brother left the chapel, you went right to your room; but he walked to the end of the hall and evidently pressed the spring unknowingly while trying to look out of the window. The same thing happened when Senor Ornelas searched for his lost coin between the altar and the wall adjoining. Jose says he had one hand on the wall just where we found the secret spring, which he pressed, bringing the Madonna up again.

"And so it is all clear, my child. And now we

will 'take the Madonna back to the cathedral in Mexico, whence it came."

"Ah! Padre," said Inez—my father! How much good it might have done him if—if—"

The Padre raised his head and looked out beyond the wide plains to the far-off mountains, seeming to see the distant canyon, the thundering rush of water, and the lone man fighting with despair.

"Mercy is infinite," he said. "As high as the heavens, as wide as the sea. One single act of contrition will sometimes blot out a lifetime of sin. Who knows, Senorita Inez—if the Madonna could save her own image, why should she allow an image of God to perish?"

## THE STRIFE OBSCURE.

Lord! who can trace but Thou  
 The strife obscure 'twixt sin's soul-thralling spell  
 And Thy keen spirit, now quenched, reviving now?  
     Or who can tell  
 While pardon's seal stands sure on David's brow,  
     Why Saul and Demas fell?  
 Oh, lest our frail hearts in the annealing break,  
 Help, for Thy mercy's sake!  
     —"The Hidden Ones," Newman.

### I.

"We are alone," exclaimed Raoul, "and the opportunity is a good one! See, I have my *theme* with me. And you, *mes freres*?"

"I have mine," said Ferdinand, drawing a folded white paper halfway out of his coat pocket.

"And yours, Bertrand?"

"Mine also is ready, *mon ami*."

"Ah! then," said Raoul, "let us sit down and read to one another a few pages. *Ciel!* but it will be almost the last time we can be alone together. Who knows where or when we comrades three will meet again?"

"Let us forget that part," observed Ferdinand, "and enjoy the present."

"Thou art wise, *mon frere*," rejoined Raoul. "And



now, Bertrand, you are the youngest, so we will give you precedence. And first, what is your *theme?*”

“My *theme*,” was the answer—and in the boy’s eyes was a tender light,—“is ‘Enthusiasm.’” He unfolded his paper as he spoke and began to read: “ ‘Enthusiasm was used by the Greeks to mean the state of one possessed and inspired by a god. How shall we find this enthusiasm? By gathering all the powers of the soul into a high unity, and turning them to action; by doing with all our hearts the work that comes to us. Such action makes the enthusiast capable of infinite patience and endurance.’ ”

The clear, boyish voice paused for a moment, and then read on:

“ ‘The enthusiast loves knowledge because God knows all things; he loves beauty because God is its source; he loves the soul because it brings man into conscious communion with God and His universe.’ ”

“Bravo!” said Ferdinand, clapping his hands. “Read on, *mon frere*.”

“I think that will do,” was the answer. “We have only half an hour before the chapel bell rings. It is your turn, Raoul.”

The one addressed unfolded his paper and spread it out before him.

"My *theme* was suggested by Pere de Casson, and is 'Science *versus* Faith,' " he said. "We premise, to start with, that faith is necessary to the divine plan. If science could make all things intelligible, knowledge would swallow faith here, as St. Paul declares it shall hereafter. Science alone can not find truth. Faith alone, however, can lift man to the infinite; while science and faith, when they go hand in hand, give man the ability to think in many directions and on many subjects that are closed to faith alone.' "

"That is very fine," said Bertrand.

"There is more," answered Raoul; "but that is enough for to-day. It is your turn, Fernan, *mon ami*."

"My *theme*," said Ferdinand, "is 'The Intellectual Life.' 'The lover of the intellectual life knows neither contempt nor indignation, is not elated by success or cast down by failure. His experience teaches him that man in becoming wiser will become nobler and happier. His power of sympathy is enlarged.' "

The young reader paused for a moment, and his fine dark eye kindled as he glanced at his companions ere resuming his *theme*.

" 'Since man is not the highest, he may not rest in himself; and culture, therefore, is a means rather

than an end. It is not length of time but intensity of application in which lies the strength to be derived from the intellectual life.' "

"That is one of the best ideas yet," said Bertrand. "We might all three make it our motto when we leave here—not length of time but intensity of application—and in all we do, little and great. What say you, *mes freres*?"

"Agreed!" answered the other two.

"And there goes the chapel bell," added Raoul; "and we can put our new motto into use at once. Let us run, let us fly! We will reduce the length of time by the intensity of our application."

The three friends laughed gaily as they started on a brisk run up the long avenue that led to the Lycee conducted by the Jesuit Fathers. In a few moments the house door opened and closed behind them.

As the bell ceased ringing, the branches behind the bench where they had been sitting parted, and presently a tall, handsome youth emerged into view, and glanced cautiously around.

"I am safe here for half an hour," he said; "then back to *Madame ma mere* and the private tutor, which, upon my soul, is not half so interesting as life here would be."

He mused for a moment, and then resumed his soliloquy:

"And strange that I, too, have my *theme* all prepared for Monsieur Adolphe. 'It must be on Freemasonry,' was his command. 'You understand, *mon ami*?' he said. 'I wish you to learn all you can about that glorious institution. But at the same time be cautious. Write your *theme* so it will satisfy, and not alarm, *Madame ma mere*.' Oh, he's a clever devil, that Adolphe!"

The youth leaned forward, and, picking up a smooth pebble from the gravelled path in front of him, threw it far out into the miniature lake that stretched beyond the grassy bank at his feet.

. "A good shot, that!" he said. "And now for your *theme*, Andre, my boy. Let us see if it will sound at all like the wisdom of those comrades three. Upon my word, what they said sounded vastly well; but how Adolphe would have laughed at it! I am not sure but that he will laugh at my *theme* also, though he will pretend to his rich parton, *Madame ma mere*, that it is *so fine*."

Drawing a folded paper from his vest pocket the young cynic began to read:

'The foremost fundamental principle of Masonry is belief in God. It teaches most impressively immortality of the soul and the resurrection. The unchangeable laws of the "ancient usage of the craft," as it is called, lays down that no man or body

of men can make innovations in the body of Masonry. So far, so good for *ma mere*. When she reads that she will nod over her knitting, and drop her needles to applaud. Then when Adolphe asks if I can not be a Mason some day, she will quickly assent.

“ ‘Masonry teaches the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Attempts have been made to substitute for the name of God that of “a creative principle,” but without success. Its system of ethics embodies brotherhood, love, relief, and truth. Act honorably by all men. Practise temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice. These are cardinal virtues.’ So far, so good. But now here is where Adolphe gets in his wedge.

“ ‘Obedience to the laws of one’s country was in 1707, as it is now, the law of Masonry; and in this same year was instituted the Grand Lodge, having power over all others. The Grand Orient has power to dispense with some of the provisions of the law, in cases where he deems that adherence to law would not be subservient to the interests of Freemasonry. It is necessary for us to understand that nothing is committed to writing: everything is secret. It teaches by legends, allegories, symbols, forms and ceremonies. Every ceremony, every badge of office, every adornment of the lodge, every article of Masonic clothing and furniture—in fact, all and

everything upon which the eye rests, and every sound that reaches the ear, in the working of a lodge, is intended to teach or impress upon the mind of the initiated a precept or principle of Masonry.' "

The youthful neophyte folded his paper, and, replacing it in his coat pocket, clapped his hands softly.

"*Hein!*" he said aloud. "On those last clauses Adolphe rests his case. The government of France must be obeyed, even though God should be banished from its system of ethics. And the Grand Orient has power to annul our adherence to the law, if the law interferes with the principles of Freemasonry. But what a fool Adolphe is not to see that the very first principle of Masonry holds all the rest in check! 'Belief in God is its foremost, fundamental principal; and "the ancient usage of the craft," lays down that no man or body of men can make innovations in the body of Masonry.' Upon my soul, if knocking the *bon Dieu* off the roster is not an innovation, what then?

"So far, so good, Andre; but what follows? Why, my boy, it is the secrecy of the whole thing that makes the Masonic power. With no written laws to govern it, with everything conducted on a basis of secrecy, it follows as a matter of course that the will of the Grand Orient, for weal or for woe, can be made supreme."

Once more, point by point, the handsome youth went over in his mind the subject of his *theme*, until suddenly a bell in the distance sounded, bringing him to his feet.

"Nine o'clock!" he said; "and Adolphe will be waiting. And, by the same token, *ma mere* pardons not readily the unpunctual one. Therefore, *helas!* I must fly."

Suiting the action to the word, the next moment found him making his way quickly through the grove of trees whence he had come half an hour earlier. In five minutes more he had scaled the iron fence that bordered the road, and was walking rapidly northward to where his mother's chateau crowned a low hill overlooking the river.

## II.

It was scarce two hours since the sun had risen on the ancient city of N., but the courthouse was crowded; for was not M. Ferdinand Villon, one of France's greatest *avocats*, to sum up the case for the prosecution in a trial that had already lasted for weeks? And who that had the chance to hear his masterly summing up of the evidence would miss it? Then, too, so many strange elements entered into the case! The legal battle had been so fiercely waged between opposing counsel that all France

was stirred to its depths, and those who were not within reach of N. scanned the newspapers eagerly. Even in Paris it was the absorbing topic of conversation; and bets were made on the outcome in the cafes and on the boulevards.

A crime of an atrocious nature had been committed. The colonel of one of France's crack regiments had been found murdered in his barrack, and suspicion pointed to one of the junior officers under his command as the assassin. The evidence against him was strong, notwithstanding the fact that the young officer stoutly asserted his innocence. It was known that on the night of the tragedy he was away on leave; but his inability to prove an alibi, or bring forward any witness who could testify as to his whereabouts at the time of the colonel's death, had so far been against him.

When M. Villon began to speak, a hush fell on the vast crowd present. Beginning in a low, carefully modulated voice to state point by point the case for the prosecution, he finally rose to the heights of oratory. The evidence seemed plain—so plain that for the crime to go unpunished would mean there was no justice in France. The honor of the army, the safeguarding of every citizen, the strength of the law, required that the prisoner at the bar should suffer for his ill deed.



For a second there was a pause, and a low murmur ran through the court room. The address had been marvellous, masterly; only a splendid intellect, such as M. Villon was known to possess, could have presented all the facts in the case so well. France was proud of its *avocat*.

M. Villon's fine dark eye swept the great crowd before him, as he uttered his concluding words:

"The chief point on which the evidence rests is that the prisoner did not get his leave until ten o'clock that night. He asserts that nearly two hours later, at twenty minutes of twelve, he was walking toward the station to catch the midnight train to Paris, when he met and spoke to his colonel, who, wrapped in a long dark cloak, seemed anxious to escape recognition. The colonel, he asserts, was alone; but the prisoner further says that he himself was not alone. Questioned as to who was his companion, he will not answer. His life hangs in the balance, and yet he refuses to bring forward this mythical witness who could save him. And finally, gentlemen, there is the testimony of France's learned physician, Dr. Raoul Charron, to the effect that when he was called in early the next morning to view the remains of the murdered colonel, his examination convinced him that the man had been dead since nine o'clock the night before—fully three

hours before the time when, according to the prisoner, he met and spoke to his colonel on the road to R.; and fully one hour before this same prisoner left his barrack, situated only a short distance from the colonel's own quarters. Gentlemen, the case is plain; and, confident that justice will be meted out correctly, I submit the issue to you, to France, and to the world."

M. Villon bowed and sat down; and a great wave of suppressed excitement, a low murmur of tongues, again swept over the crowded court. A door at the back of the room opened and closed; a quick, firm tread passed up the long corridor; and all eyes were turned as a tall, soldierly man, apparently about thirty years of age, was seen making his way toward the raised platform at the other end of the room. He directed his steps easily to where the counsel for the defence was whispering with several of his colleagues, while every eye was upon him; and so great was the interest he excited that no one noticed the start of surprise on the part of both M. Villon and the prisoner. There were a few hurried, whispered words and then a hush fell on the crowded room.

"Gentlemen," observed Maitre Grandin, counsel for the defence, "a new witness has appeared for the prisoner at the bar—one whose importance changes the whole aspect of this trial, inasmuch as he claims

to be the friend who was with the prisoner the night he met his colonel on the road to R. He will now be sworn as a witness."

A few moments ago the crowd, hanging breathlessly on M. Villon's eloquence, was ready to send the prisoner to the gallows; now a storm of applause broke forth as the counsel for the defence ceased speaking. Versatile France, easily dominated by the latest dramatic situation, had forgotten M. Villon.

There was a confused murmur of voices; then a hush fell once more on the room, and the young officer took his stand in the witness box.

"Your name?"

"Bertrand de Remy."

"Your age?"

"Thirty years."

"Occupation?"

"Captain of Chasseurs-a-Cheval."

"You are a friend of the prisoner, Lieutenant Andre Dumont?"

"Yes."

"You were with him at twenty minutes of twelve on the night of May 15, on the road to R.?"

"I was."

"The time, hour and place are as he stated?"

"Yes."

"And at this point on the road you both saw and spoke to Colonel S.?"

"We did."

Again a wave of excitement, and even a low thunder of applause, was heard in the court room, which was quickly silenced by the court.

"Captain de Remy, you have been duly sworn, your testimony admitted; but, nevertheless, so grave is the case that we ask you once again: are you sure the man you saw and spoke to was Colonel S.?"

"I am sure."

"Where did he seem to be going?"

"In the same direction we were. He was walking slowly; we were walking rapidly, and hence overtook him."

"You passed him?"

"Yes."

"Did you see him again after that?"

"For a moment, yes."

"When and where?"

"At three o'clock the next morning, in the Gare du Nord Paris."

"Did you speak to him?"

"No: we passed him. It was only for a moment that we saw him when we left the train."

"You infer, therefore, that he travelled to Paris on the same train you did?"

"That is my impression."

"Now, Captain de Remy, one word more. Where were you and the Lieutenant going? Had it anything to do with the supposed disappearance of the Colonel?"

"Our movements had absolutely nothing to do with Colonel S. As to where we were going, Lieutenant Dumont must answer."

"You may sit down," said the court. "Lieutenant Dumont will be examined again to-morrow."

Maitre Grandin, counsel for the defence, now arose. The testimony of this new witness, he said, was indisputable. A young man of stainless integrity and honor, he had come to his friend's rescue as soon as he could reach him after hearing of his plight. Captain de Remy introduced new and strange complications into the case. According to his testimony, he saw Colonel S. at the Gare du Nord in Paris at three o'clock Wednesday morning, May 16. Six hours later—at nine o'clock of the same day—the Colonel was found murdered in his barrack. It was possible that the Colonel could have journeyed back to R. that same morning, and have reached his barrack by seven o'clock; but hardly without being seen, as it was then broad daylight, and the

regiment was astir. Besides, according to the learned medical expert, Dr. Raoul Charron, when he saw the remains at nine o'clock, the Colonel had been dead fully twelve or thirteen hours.

The counsel for the defence here sat down, confident that the case for his client wore a different aspect from what it had worn earlier in the day.

An hour later the crowd streamed out of the court room and dispersed throughout the city. Presently a side door in the building opened, and M. Villon, the great *avocat*, came quickly down the stone steps to where his automobile was waiting to take him to his hotel. At the same moment a fair-haired, rather stout man drove by in a closed carriage. The driver suddenly halted, and the stout man sprang out and made his way to the pavement, just as the door, that had closed on M. Villon, opened again to give egress to a handsome young man in the uniform of a captain of Chasseurs-a-Cheval. Pausing a moment, the third comer ran down the steps and joined the two others, who were already exchanging greetings.

"Raoul."

"Ferdinand!"

"And you too, Bertrand, *mon ami*!"

"So we meet again," said the young officer, "and after thirteen years! It is well met, is it not, *mes amis*?"

His candid blue eyes looked out on the other two with the same frank, earnest gaze of the youth of seventeen. Clearly, Bertrand de Remy had lost neither his ideals nor his enthusiasm.

"And we are all mixed up in this case," said Villon. "Send your carriage away, Charron, and both of you come home with me for dinner."

The great doctor looked at his watch.

"I was on my way home for that very purpose," he answered. "An hour, then, Ferdinand, *mon ami*. *Ciell* but it will seem like old times."

### III.

"I regret I can not stay longer with you, *mes freres*; but I must report for duty at eight o'clock, so you must pardon me if I now make my adieux."

The young Captain arose as he spoke, and, with a few more words among them, he soon took leave.

Maitre Villon closed the door after him, and returned to the luxuriously furnished dining-room which the Hotel Dieu had placed at his disposal. As he resumed his seat, Dr. Charron looked at him and smiled.

"Thirteen years, Ferdinand, he said, "and De Remy still keeps his ideals. *Mon Dieu!* several times when we were talking I paused to choose my

words. With those clear blue eyes opposite me, I felt that some things could be left unsaid."

The great lawyer shrugged his shoulders.

"But what would you?" he said. "It is one thing to be a boy, my friend, another to be a man. For myself, I pursued the intellectual life, and it led me far away from worn-out superstitions."

"I fear my experience has been the same," said the physician, musingly. "And yet, Villon, to this day I know of no one whose intellect was finer or whose mind had a broader scope than our old tutor, Pere de Casson, at the Lycee; and to him what you call worn-out superstitions were living realities. We know beyond a doubt that he believed what he taught us."

"If that is so," said Villon, "why did you abandon faith and keep only science? Now I remember it: that was your *theme* when we graduated."

"If I am not mistaken," rejoined the physician, "you, too, Ferdinand, saw more than one aspect of the intellectual life at that time—something different from what you now follow. What mysterious power caused the change?"

"The same power that changed you," was the answer.

"You mean—?"

The lawyer raised a warning hand.



"Understand, my friend," he said, "I did not lose my faith suddenly, nor did you. Two paths opened before me. I had learned what was that tremendous, mysterious, secret power which could reward or crush those on whom it laid its hand; and I—well, I thirsted for power and fame. If I swam with the tide, success was sure. France, I said to myself, has changed: the old Faith, the old ideals are vanishing. It was whispered to me that a new order of things was to arise, and I knew that the power that decreed it was absolute; and so—I chose the path that led to fame and fortune."

The grey eyes of the physician took on an expression that for a moment recalled the Raoul of his college days.

"Has it all been smooth sailing?" he asked. "Have you always felt satisfied?"

"Suppose I ask the same question of you?" said Villon.

"Ah, well!" was the response. "I fancy the question must be left unanswered, though there is no doubt we have arrived at the same conclusions. Science fascinated me. It ever beckoned me on; and I found science and religion incompatible, so I gradually dropped the one as I advanced further in the other."

"Ah, my friend," said Villon, "you are not so

wise as you think! Look at Morgagni, Auenbrugger, Laennec, and Pasteur,—great physicians all of them, and good Catholics as well.”

“To get back to our subject,” observed Charron, almost harshly. “You were saying before de Remy left us, Villon, that there are certain aspects of this trial of Andre Dumont that the public has yet to hear of. What are they?”

The two friends were soon deep in conversation over the celebrated case, and ceased only when a glance at his watch warned the physician that he must hurry away to his patients.

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile Bertrand de Remy, having reported to his commanding officer, had been granted leave of absence for forty-eight hours. He made a hasty visit to his barracks, and was soon walking through the city, and presently down a broad avenue that led to the outskirts of the town. Half a mile beyond he came in sight of a small but charming chateau that stood a little way back from the road. Passing under the *porte-cochere*, he rang the bell and was admitted by an old serving-man, who greeted him as a friend.

“Is my mother at home, Louis?” he asked.

“Yes, Monsieur le Capitaine. She is in the salon.”

Entering the room on the right of the wide hall, the young officer was greeted with an exclamation. A charming little lady, still almost youthful in appearance in spite of her grey hair, arose to meet him.

"Bertrand, my dear boy! What an unexpected pleasure!"

"Only for a few hours, mother mine!" said the young man. "I have a multitude of things to attend to." And then he proceeded to tell her about the trial of Andre Dumont, and that he had obtained leave to journey to A., to obtain more data, which he thought would strengthen his friend's case.

"The whole affair is very strange," said Madame de Remy. "Charron is a reputable physician, and both he and others are sure the Colonel had been dead thirteen hours when he was found. Yet you say you saw him alive and well in Paris only a few hours before he was discovered dead in his barracks here in N. Do you think Bertrand, *mon coeur*" (and Madame de Remy crossed herself), "that what you saw was a vision?"

"Mother dear," said the young man in a laughing, caressing voice, "it was no vision or dream, but the real Colonel in the flesh. Of that I am sure."

The clear blue eyes of the son looked into the soft brown ones of the mother, and what the latter saw there satisfied her,—honesty, loyalty, truth. It

was her boy still, little Bertrand, though clothed in the uniform of a captain of Chasseurs-a-Cheval.

Two hours later the young officer was bidding his mother good-bye, preparatory to taking the midnight train for A.

"I have just time to spend a day there, mother," he said, "and get back by the time my forty-eight hours' leave is up."

She saw him depart, and then called Louis to place a lamp in the hall window. The night was dark, and the lights of the chateau were soon left behind. But Bertrand de Remy knew every inch of the road, which ran in a straight line two miles beyond the chateau. It ended in a little railroad station, where the midnight train would stop if flagged.

The young officer had chosen this route instead of the longer one of the road back to the main depot at N., so as to save time, and remain with his mother as long as possible. He walked quickly, without meeting any one, until he came to a point a mile and a half from his mother's chateau, and only a quarter of a mile above the little station. Here there was a large tank where the midnight express always stopped for water. On one side of the road where he was walking was a grove of trees, on the other, a level meadow, of unoccupied land beyond which was the

railroad. Just as Bertrand reached here, to his astonishment he heard the whistle of the approaching express. In a flash he comprehended that his mother must have made some mistake in the time, when he had asked the hour instead of looking at his watch. If he could not take this train he could not get to A. and back before his leave was up; and reach there he must and would, for Andre Dumont's sake.

The next moment he was racing across the meadow reaching the gigantic water tank just as the long train of cars glided around a curve in the road and came to a standstill. Bertrand's mind worked rapidly. If the conductor on the train was one he knew, he would have no difficulty in being taken on as a passenger. As he looked up and down the line, two dark figures, heavily cloaked, stole out from behind the water tank. The night was starless and without any moon; and the young officer had his eye on the swinging lantern of an approaching railroad employee, so he did not see these figures, who, softly and noiselessly, took up a position behind him. The swinging lantern drew nearer, and the next moment de Remy uttered an exclamation of relief.

"Ah, Pierre!" he said, and then in a few words he explained.

Pierre, a veteran officer of the road, was all bows

and smiles. Here was an unoccupied compartment he would unlock for Monsieur le Capitaine and his friends, and they should not be disturbed; he, Pierre, would see to it.

The blowing of the whistle drowned the latter part of the conductor's speech as he walked down the line, accompanied by the young officer, and closely followed by the mysterious strangers. Unlocking a compartment, the conductor held the door open while Bertrand sprang in, quickly followed by the two behind him—the one a man, the other a woman. Closing the door, the conductor gave the signal to start, and in another second the train was gliding across the plains.

Inside the compartment, Bertrand de Remy had turned in surprise at the dark, mysterious figures that he now saw for the first time. Even as the train began to move he laid his hand on the bell cord to summon the conductor, when the taller of the two threw off his cloak, at the same time that the smaller and more slender figure sprang forward and laid a detaining hand on his arm. A laugh and a gay voice greeted him.

"By the honor of France," it said, "we have cheated them all—Villon, Charron, the learned judge, Monsieur This and Monsieur That! What say you, Bertrand, *mon brave?*"

"Andre!" exclaimed the young officer. "You here? How and why?"

"O my wise philosopher," was the answer, "who would not be without rather than within prison walls? As to the how, the best sister in the world came to my aid. My escape is chiefly due to her."

A caressing voice sounded in the young officer's ear.

"Ah, Bertrand, *mon coeur*, how fortunate this meeting! Now that we have you, Andre's escape is sure."

The dark, beautiful face of the young girl gazed up at him with a beseeching expression. Habitual self-control forsook the young officer. With a cry he sprang forward.

"Aimee!"

#### IV.

Amazement, confusion, joy, all mingled in the young officer's face as he gazed from one to the other of the two figures before him: Andre, one of his best friends, whom only that morning he had left behind prison bars undergoing trial for the most serious crime of which man is capable; and the girl, Aimee, Andre's sister and his (Bertrand's) fiancée, in order to see whom he had obtained his forty-eight hours' leave at a time when he could ill be spared.

What did it all mean? Why should Andre have sought to escape when his release on honorable grounds seemed so sure?

"Upon my soul, *mon brave*," said Andre, "you look like the stuck pigs we used to see when as boys we went to the fair. Where is your French blood, my friend? Let us laugh and be merry, for tomorrow we die."

But the young officer did not smile. His grave blue eyes turned toward the girl for a solution of the situation, and both her love and her womanly intuition made her respond.

"Come and let us sit down," she said, "and I will explain. And you, Andre, cease being so ribald."

Once seated, Aimee Dumont slipped her hand into her fiance's, and gave him a glance that reassured him. The world might be upside down, but he still had Aimee.

"Listen, *mon coeur*," she said. "We are alone and understand each other here, so we can speak plainly. You know that marvellous secret force to which we have all three given our allegiance; that society which will make of our beloved France a nation so great and glorious that no other will be her peer? It is wise, this society. It knows all; it sees farther than we see. It plans, invents, commands; for us, we need only obey."



The girl's dark eye kindled, and she continued:

"All this you learned, Bertrand, that night you were initiated into the society. The very night it was that poor Colonel S. was murdered. As to us two, Andre and I, we have been learning it from Monsieur Adolphe for years. Well, Bertrand dear, Adolphe came to me two days ago. The society had, for wise reasons, decided that Andre must escape. It was not for us to question; they willed it, we would obey. Adolphe planned it all. I journeyed here with good Jean, Andre's foster-brother. We went to the prison together. Two of us, you observe, went in, and two came out; but it was Andre who came out, and not Jean. To-morrow he will be found—our good Jean, so simple and so brave—and all France will ring with the tale; but the trial will come to an end. For the present Andre is here, and he journeys now to place himself in the hands of the society, and they will see to it that he is not arrested again. It is all very simple, *mon ami*, and very clear; is it not?"

Across Bertrand de Remy's brain came floating some words from a lecture by his old tutor, Pere de Casson. "Enthusiasm," said the tutor, "should have truth for its goal, and truth lies at the end of a straight road. Look, then, neither to the right nor to the left, nor be deceived by side issues or false

enthusiasms. For false ideals and false enthusiasms can not lead to truth; and without truth for its first beginning and last end, no enthusiasm, however ardent, is worthy of the name." Should that early teaching, in face of the present temptation, now be forever lost? The young officer's mind, which had been in a chaos, regained its balance.

"It is not so long," he said, "since I learned that the fundamental law of the society, next to its belief in God, is supposed to be respect for the laws of its country. The law of France, Andre, even though unjustly, put you in prison. You were having a fair and honorable trial, openly before the world. To my mind, your escape this way has been base."

"The age of chivalry, *mon brave*," said Andre, "is passed."

"But not the age of honor," *mon ami*.

"Pooh!" was the answer. "Look you, Bertrand, the will that governs the society is supreme; that will ordered my release. For what reason you will know later. It is for us simply to obey."

"I am a soldier of France," said the young officer, proudly, "and as such I know no laws but the plain open laws of my country. This society, with its secret laws, I repudiate henceforth and forever."

"It will be so much the worse for you if you do," replied Andre, quietly.

"Think twice, Bertrand, *mon coeur*," interposed the young girl. "You are excited and upset now; but the society is too great and glorious to be lightly given up."

"Aimee dearest," said the young man, looking fondly at his betrothed, "I had begun to doubt this society even before to-night, when doubt has changed into certainty. You have been deceived, so have I; but with me the veil has now been withdrawn. I would die for France, but I will not assist her secret enemies to ruin her."

"Pull the bell cord," interrupted Andre, gloomily, "and summon the conductor and denounce me. *Ma foi*, but it will make a dramatic scene!"

"No," answered the young officer, quietly. "I did not bring you here, Andre, nor did I assist you to escape; hence, so far as I am concerned, you may go free. I shall leave the train at the first stopping place and return at once to N."

But Aimee arose with a little cry.

"I cast in my lot with Bertrand," she said. "Listen, Andre, my brother! Something tells me he must be right, and you and Adolphe all wrong."

The young girl paused for a moment; then, with a little gesture and sigh, she turned to her betrothed:

"And you, Bertrand, do not leave me. Stay with us until we reach A., and then you can take me

home. Once there, we can talk it all over and see our way more clearly."

"Ah, dearest!" said the young man, "we will work together for God and France, you and I; and not in darkness or behind closed doors, but in the clear light of day. Is it not so?"

"Very pretty, indeed!" said Andre. "And now I am weary, and move that we drop these theatricals and compose ourselves to sleep. When we reach A., at daybreak, you two can go your way and I will go mine. *N'est-ce pas?*"

He turned down the light as he spoke, and settled himself comfortably in a corner of the railway carriage. There was little or no fear of pursuit before the next morning, and by that time he would be safely out of harm's way.

Sleep came quickly to the young Lieutenant; but to Aimee it was long in coming, and to Bertrand not at all. He hailed with joy the first beams of daylight; and lost no time, when the train reached A., in seeing Aimee safely home. The lovers had a few hours' talk in the garden of the chateau where Aimee lived with her aunt, her parents having been dead several years. Point by point the two young people went over the teaching of Monsieur Adolphe, together with their own individual experience of the cult.

"It is all very simple," said Bertrand. "We have been deceived, that is all. But I am beginning to see, dear one, that what we thought such a glorious cause is neither Christian nor Catholic."

\* \* \* \* \*

All France rang with the escape of Lieutenant Andre Dumont. Why had he attempted it when his release through Captain de Remy's testimony seemed so sure? If he was not the assassin, who was? And if he was innocent, why had he fled? It was supposed that Captain de Remy would again be summoned to appear before the court, especially as he was known to have been on leave the night of the escape; but for some inexplicable reason this was not done. The papers laid stress on the fact that he was known to have been with his mother from eight o'clock until nearly midnight, between which time Lieutenant Dumont made his escape. Perhaps the conductor on the express train could have told a great deal; but he, too, had decided to keep silent. For want of the prisoner, therefore, who had disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up, the counsel for both the defence and the prosecution were dismissed, and for the time being the case was closed.

## V.

It wanted one hour of the forty-eight that would end his leave of absence when the young Captain of Chasseurs-a-Cheval presented himself before his Colonel. It was seven o'clock in the evening, and he found the barracks in a state of excitement, and some move clearly on foot, the nature of which was soon unfolded to him.

There had been a serious disturbance at F., in the west of France. A picked company of the regiment was to be sent there early the next morning, and Captain de Remy was appointed to its command. The young officer looked pale as he stood, silent and erect, listening to his Colonel's instructions.

"You go under sealed orders, Captain de Remy, with the understanding that this disturbance is to be put down in accordance with your instructions. The people must be made to conform to the law. Our orders from the Minister of War on this point are very strict. No leniency whatever is to be shown."

"Yes, Monsieur le Colonel," answered Bertrand.

"When you reach F.," continued the Colonel, "consult at once with the mayor and the government's representative, who is already on the spot, and then take action with them. Be ready to start at daybreak to-morrow. The horses are fresh, and the ride will take only about five hours."

The Colonel had been brief, almost curt—a fact that was not lost on Bertrand de Remy.

At six o'clock the next morning the Captain rode out of N., at the head of his command; and, once clear of the city, officer and soldiers put their horses at a gallop. A fresh breeze blew over the vineyards and fields through which their course led, and the clear morning sun lit up chateaux and peasants' cottages as they rapidly made their way westward. The ride in the fresh air was the best tonic the young officer could have had. It cleared his brain and restored his mental poise, which had been sorely tried within the past forty-eight hours.

He asked himself had he been blameless in all that had occurred; and conscience answered "No." Had he not allowed devotion to his fiancée and her brother to lead him into a course regarding which he had not inquired too closely? His affections and enthusiasm had led him astray. In the society, he thought he saw the future salvation of France; and it had proved to be a veritable cancer, which, unless it was eradicated or its power impaired, threatened France's very life as a nation. He knew the danger he incurred in having penetrated into the secrets of the society only to repudiate them; but he was brave, and gave no thought to any personal danger.

Their five hours' ride led through a country dis-

trict, and was unmarked by any incident. It was about eleven o'clock when the red roofs of the houses and the tall spires of the cathedral of F. came into sight. As they drew nearer, they saw that some excitement seemed to be on foot, which the sight of the soldiers clattering through the town seemed to increase rather than diminish. In the square in front of the cathedral a large and vociferous crowd was assembled. Peasants, townspeople, children, and a few gendarmes mingled in a confused and constantly moving mass of humanity. In the rapid glance he gave in passing, de Remy noticed ladies, apparently of high rank, side by side with peasant women holding their babies. Here and there the black soutane of a priest showed distinct and sombre against the brilliant color of the women's dresses.

Drawing rein for a moment, the young officer inquired his way to the office of the mayor; and was directed, none too civilly, to a tall, narrow building across the square, and facing the cathedral. Bidding his command wait outside, he mounted the steep, narrow stairs to the office of the mayor, and was met at the door by a short, lean man, who greeted him in excited French.

"My God, but it was terrible, terrible! The city was almost in the hands of a mob, and for twenty-four hours I was completely at their mercy. The



gendarmes were powerless; they were driven back again and again, and one of them almost murdered by the angry throng. But now—Heaven be praised!—Monsieur le Capitaine and his soldiers have come, and all will be well.”

The Captain saw the need of instant action. Drawing his sealed instructions from his pocket, he opened and read them. They were brief. Bertrand de Remy, on reaching F., was to seek out at once Monsieur Adolphe, Secretary of Government Affairs, who, with his confreres, had been sent to F., to carry out some plans of the government which had been the means of arousing this extraordinary disturbance. He was to consult with Monsieur Adolphe, and lend him all the aid possible to suppress the insurrection and restore order.

Putting the paper back in his pocket, de Remy turned to the mayor.

“Where is Monsieur Adolphe?” he asked. “I must see him at once.”

“Ah, Monsieur le Capitaine, he is even now at the Convent of the Soeurs Misericorde, just outside the city. For three hours this morning he was within the cathedral, in the face of great danger. Then he slipped out of a side door and made his way to the convent, unnoticed by the mob, who think he is still in the cathedral sacristy. Oh, but it was a

clever move! They have immense treasures, these Sisters. Some of their sacred vessels were given them in the past by kings and queens of France."

To all this the young Captain paid little attention. He was not here to talk of gold and jewels, but to attend to his military duty. The official was evidently a very loquacious person.

"I would like to see Monsieur Adolphe at once," he said.

"Certainly, Monsieur. I will appoint a guide. The prefect of police is here, and will await Monsieur's pleasure. His horse is below, and he will not lose an instant in conducting Monsieur le Capitaine and his men to the convent."

"Where is Monsieur le Prefet?" said the young officer, almost impatiently.

A tall man came forward.

"At your service, Monsieur."

"I am pleased to meet you," said Bertrand.  
"Come on, Monsieur!"

The two men hurried down the steep stairs; and, once in the street, Monsieur le Prefet unfastened his horse and vaulted into the saddle. Bertrand was already mounted, and soon they were galloping across the square and down a side street to the outskirts of the city.

The convent, a magnificent building, set in a park,

and crowning the brow of a low hill, was soon reached. It took only a moment for soldiers and Prefet to ride at a brisk trot up the long avenue to the convent door. Here a peculiar scene awaited them.

"*Mon Dieu*, what does it mean?" said Bertrand, turning to the Prefet, whose sense of humor seemed to be getting the better of any other emotion.

The heavy oak doors of the convent were closed, the blinds of the windows were barred, and there was no sign of life save in front of the door. Here, securely fastened by ropes to one of the stone pillars of the *porte-cochere*, was a small and very stout man of about sixty, very red in the face and apparently very angry.

The Prefet drew his horse close to that of the young officer.

"That is Monsieur Adolphe," he said.

Bertrand was off his charger in a moment; but already the angry dignitary was pouring forth a flood of excited information, interspersed with vituperation of those who had so closely tied him. He, Monsieur Adolphe, accredited representative of the government, had never been so outrageously treated. For three hours, while he and his confreres had been trying to take an inventory of the church property in the cathedral, they had been beset by a howling mob, who had threatened their very lives. They

had ended by locking him and his friends in the sacristy with all the gold and silver vessels of the church spread out before them. "Feast your eyes on all you can see here," they had said; "but know, O you robbers and thieves, that into the church or near the sanctuary you shall not go."

For three mortal hours he had sat there, until the mayor had created a diversion by sending the *gendarmes* to make a sortie in front of the cathedral; and, in the rush, he had managed to unlock the sacristy door and let them out. He, Monsieur Adolphe, called Heaven to witness that that was enough. But when, in obedience to his strict duty, he and his confreres had repaired to the convent to take the inventory of its property, and, further, to give notice to the nuns that within a week they must close their establishment and leave France, he had been met by barred doors, and admittance was refused. And—oh, crowning humiliation!—as he stood there, commanding the nuns in the name of the law of France to unlock the door and admit him, he had been seized by seven devils in the guise of men, who had quickly bound him and left him in his present plight, finishing up by carrying off his aids to—Heaven knows where. They should suffer for it, these nuns! Let them now confront the majesty of France's army—and so forth, and so forth.

Monsieur Adolphe paused for breath; and the soldiers, obedient to military discipline, awaited the order to unfasten his thongs. But that order did not immediately come.

The Captain of Chasseurs-a-Cheval was very pale.

"Do you mean to tell me, Monsieur Adolphe," he said, "that all this excitement and disturbance is due to an order from the government, first, to take an inventory of all Church property here, and, secondly, to expel the nuns from their convent?"

"That is it, Monsieur le Capitaine."

"And you are here as the government's chief agent in the matter?"

"It is even so, *mon Capitaine*."

"Then understand, Monsieur Adolphe," said the young officer—and there was scorn and anger in his voice—"that you deserve all you have received and more. I was sent here to quell a disturbance—to engage, as I supposed, in such work as befits a soldier of France and a gentleman. But France, it seems, has no better game to play than to outrage the rights of the Church and hound defenceless women from the country. With this game, Monsieur Adolphe, I will have nothing to do; nor will I permit the soldiers under my command to move hand or foot in the matter. For yourself, as you can not remain here

forever, I will order your release, but only on condition that you take the first train for Paris."

Monsieur Adolphe gasped. It was incredible, unheard of! An officer of France refusing to obey orders!

"Do you know it means ruin to you?" he said.

De Remy's blue eyes flashed.

"Ruin to me as a soldier of France—yes," he answered; "but the preservation of my honor. I will not render to Caesar the things that are God's."

"Very fine!" said Monsieur Adolphe. "The man is surely mad."

"And now, Monsieur Adolphe," added Bertrand, "I will order my men to unbind your cords, on condition that you promise to go direct to the station and take the first train for Paris."

Monsieur Adolphe considered.

"Very well," he said, "I will go."

De Remy signed to two soldiers to undo the thongs that bound the imprisoned man; at the same time he hurriedly walked a few paces down the carriage drive that ran parallel with the convent. But he saw no sign of human life; and, coming back, he mounted the stone steps to the main entrance and deliberately rang the bell.

A small aperture in the heavy oaken door was

presently opened, disclosing to view the pale face of the portress.

"*Ma Soeur*," said the young officer, lifting his cap as he spoke, "I am not a foe but a friend. You have little cause to regard my uniform with respect; but if you will admit me to see your superior, you need fear no harm. Tell her Captain de Remy wishes to see her on matters relating to the safety of herself and her nuns."

There was truth and sincerity in the young officer's face and voice that carried conviction to his sorely tried listener.

"I believe you, Monsieur," she said "I will carry your message to Reverend Mother."

She closed the opening in the door, and Bertrand remained motionless until her return in about five minutes. This time there was the sound of iron bars being let down; the door was presently opened and he was admitted.

He had scarcely disappeared from view when Monsieur Adolphe, now free of his confining bands, turned to the soldiers who were scattered around, resting on the grass. They were alone, the Prefet having left some five minutes before.

"My men," he said, "listen! You heard your Captain refuse to obey his orders. Ruin and disgrace await him, and you will share his fate. I am

the government's lawful representative. If you will follow me now, at once; into the convent, you will have nothing to fear, and all will be substantially rewarded. First, then, I want your Captain taken prisoner and held until we hear from your Colonel; secondly, I want your co-operation in carrying out my orders to take an inventory of the Church property here and at the cathedral."

Monsieur Adolphe spoke rapidly and with insistence. The men hesitated; they were genuinely fond of their Captain, but they knew that what Monsieur Adolphe said was true. The latter saw their hesitation; and, with that intuition which has so often enabled a single man to sway a multitude of Frenchmen, who, *en masse*, always require some one to tell them what they want, or what they should do, he acted before the soldiers had time to think, further.

"Forward!" he cried. "Follow me, my men, for the honor of France!"

Suited the action to the word, he ran up the steps and laid his hand on the massive bronze handle of the door. There was a second of suspense—then, with a cheer, the men were behind him. The door, which had only been closed and not fastened, was flung open; and the horde of undisciplined men, for the moment free of all military control, surged into the great hall of the convent. They had a momen-



tary glimpse of a long line of frightened nuns in the distance; then the ranks broke, and the nuns fled toward the back door of the parlor. One of the men began to sing the *Marseillaise* as Monsieur Adolphe flushed and triumphant, opened the parlor door at his right, preparatory to taking the refractory Captain of Chasseurs-a-Cheval a prisoner.

For a moment there was a confused murmur of voices as the nuns flocked around the Mother Superior, who had arisen from the chair at the end of the room, where she had been talking to Bertrand de Remy. It had been a trying and vexatious day, Monsieur Adolphe felt that this was his hour of glory. He turned to the men behind him and said:

“Take yonder Captain a prisoner.”

There was a flash of steel; a glint of gold lace as it caught the sun slanting through the wooden shutter of an east window; a tall form advancing across the room, and untold fire in a pair of stern blue eyes that faced the intruder and his men on the threshold of the door.

“How dare you, Monsieur Adolphe!” cried a clear, sonorous voice. “And you, Hector, Louis, Eugene! Are you soldiers of France to join in pastime like this? Back, every one of you, or I will use my sword.”

He advanced further, his tall, handsome figure

drawn up to its full height, his gleaming blade held in front of him.

To the poor nuns, terrified, trembling, expectant, it seemed as if the blessed Archangel Michael, with his drawn sword, had come down from heaven to do battle in their defence. They saw the men waver, and then fall back step by step, as Bertrand drew nearer and nearer, his steel blade flashing in the rapid circles he cut in the air.

Then Monsieur Adolphe collected his scattered wits and spoke:

"Forward, you hounds!—forward, or it is ruin for you!"

"Back!" cried de Remy, in a voice of thunder. "Back, men, to your horses; and stay there till I come."

With one accord the men turned and fled. That voice and presence were to be obeyed.

There was a soft footfall behind the young officer; and the Mother Superior, very slender and very pale, passed him and made straight to where Monsieur Adolphe, very red and very angry, was breathing out threatenings and slaughter after the vanishing soldiers. She laid a light hand on the arm of the excited man.

"My father!"

"Victoire!"

"What does this mean, father? What are you doing here?"

"*Mon Dieu*, Victoire, I thought you were safe in Belgium!"

"I was father; but that was a week ago. Now I am here, sent hither as superior to this community to lead them to far-off America, because unhappy, distracted France will harbor us no longer. We have said our *Fiat*, and we go."

Beads of perspiration stood on Monsieur Adolphe's brow. Despair, shame, humiliation, overwhelmed him. He had been found out by his only child—the one being on earth whom he loved, and whose respect he craved. It was his daughter he was turning out into the world, an exile from her country and from him.

"O my God! Victoire!" he exclaimed. "Not you! I did not mean it for you. You were safe in Belgium, I thought—safe from harm."

The young nun's eyes flashed.

"Yes," she said, "I know all that. This is your Nemesis, father. All these thousands of women who are pouring out of France have fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters—dear ones who mourn them as you will mourn me. I understand now what that wonderful secret service is to which you have devoted your life. You think it will bring France

honor and glory, but already it is dragging her name in the dust. For look, you my father: this struggle between Church and State is going to end in a second Revolution. When religion is banished from France, then will the poor man arise in his might to fight all order and law."

Monsieur Adolphe was past speaking. His daughter's prophecy laid bare a hideous future. What if that power that hedged him around and ruled France should indeed be broken, and by the very forces its teaching had created?

"And now, father," said the nun, "you must go. Captain de Remy has promised us his protection until to-morrow morning, when we all leave here. He is a brave man and we know we can trust him. He and his men will keep guard outside to-night. In the morning we leave for Havre."

"Let me go with you, Victoire," said Monsieur Adolphe.

"Can you do it?" she asked.

Alas! He knew he could not. Where was the moral courage to break his chains?

At the first words showing the relationship between the unhappy man and the young Mother Superior, Captain de Remy had left the room. Monsieur Adolphe and his daughter were alone. Very slowly the man arose. He seemed to have aged ten

years in the last half hour. The nun laid her cool hand on his brow, then bent and kissed him.

"*Mon pere*," she said, and her voice broke, "will you not learn to be merciful to the *pauvre Soeurs* because of to-day? Cease this sacrilege, this robbery—this anarchy turned inside out, for that is what it is. And now farewell!"

He heard her light footfall pass down the hall; the glass door leading toward the chapel opened and closed, and he was alone. With a groan he walked out of the room, down the long stone steps, and out under the *porte-cochere*. Without a word to de Remy or the soldiers, who, thoroughly ashamed, were now completely under their Captain's control, he walked down the avenue and out of the convent gate. In another hour he was *en route* for Paris.

## VI.

Captain de Remy was court-martialed and dismissed from the army. France had no use for so disobedient an officer. But the little mother smiled, as she fastened his father's sword to his belt, and pinned to his breast the Cross of the Legion of Honor that a better and purer France had given to his grandfather; for had not her son faithfully served the King of kings, who once ruled France through

St. Louis? And was he not worthy of a long line of great and glorious men of France, whose light can never grow dim?

She smiled still more bravely, this little mother with the soft brown eyes, upheld by that courage that only mothers have in its perfection, when she had to say good-bye to Bertrand and Aimee, who were leaving France to begin a new life beyond the seas.

"I am too old to leave here," she said "but you, my children, are young and strong. Go, and may God bless you in a new life of honor, usefulness and love!"

So they set sail for the New World, and knew not half the pain in the heart of the little mother, who, left behind in the old familiar surroundings, sent up fervent prayers for them and for France.

Is it not true that France, dragged to depths of infidelity, has still left some faithful souls, who give her of their prayers and tears and vigils? And, therefore, may she not rise again to heights of sanctity? The race is not always to the swift or to the strong.

"Patience, my heart!" said the little mother. "The time will come."

\* \* \* \* \*

Several months later Andre Dumont was closeted alone with the head of the secret society.

"And now," said the younger man, after an hour's interview, "as it was not I who murdered Colonel S., who was it?"

The master shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"*Parbleu, mon ami*," he said. "It was a case of wheels within wheels. The Colonel was known to be bitterly opposed to us. A staunch and bigoted Catholic, the idol of his men, he possessed an influence that we feared. He had a twin brother, this Colonel, his very image—a man devoted heart and soul to our cause. We sent him to warn the Colonel that an officer of France is not a missionary. In the discussion that followed, Francois S. got angry and accidentally killed the Colonel. It was Francois, wrapped in the Colonel's cloak, whom you met on the road,—Francois whom de Remy saw at the Gare du Nord in Paris, and mistook for the Colonel. So far you understand, my friend.

"Simple enough when once explained," said Dumont. "But why was I spirited out of prison just as de Remy appeared on the scene?"

"Wheels, wheels again, *mon brave!* de Remy appears. *Parbleu!* but there is his sworn word that he twice sees his Colonel at a time when the best medical authority says he was lying dead. An investigation follows; they get on the trail, and the twin brother is traced. *Mon Dieu*, they have him! It all comes

out. The Reactionists raise a commotion; even the Pope takes a hand in it. 'Down with the secret societies! they cry. So you perceive, *mon brave*, discretion is the better part of valor. That fool of an Adolphe works on your sister, Mlle. Aimee. She goes to the prison, disguised; and, behold, presently you are free! There is no investigation, all is well, and—"

There was a knock at the door, followed by the entrance of Monsieur Adolphe.

"Your pardon, Monsieur!" he said. "The matter is urgent. Dispatches have been received that report an uprising among the wine-growers all over the south of France. The people, backed by three hundred mayors, refuse to obey the gendarmes. They are ugly and defiant." "*O mon Dieu*," Monsieur Adolphe muttered under his breath, and his teeth chattered as he tried in vain to control a trembling of all his limbs, "it is, as Victoire said, the beginning of the end."



AN EPISODE OF THE PRESENT STRUGGLE  
IN FRANCE.

O Heart of Jesus, may I forget my right hand, may I forget myself, if ever I forget Thy benefits and my promises; if I cease to love Thee and place in Thee my confidence and my consolation!—Last words of the Vow of Louis XVI.

## I.

"There will be no school to-day, petit. You had better run home."

The child threw a startled glance at the tall gendarme who stood in front of the lofty iron gates, through which he had been accustomed daily to pass. Other children that day had tried to run past the uniformed guard, but ten-year-old Felix stood still. The son of a soldier knew how to respect soldierly authority.

"What is the matter, Monsieur?" he asked. "Yesterday I said my lessons to Soeur Marguerite; she said nothing to me about a holiday to-day."

The tall soldier laughed.

"It will be many holidays now for the nuns, *mon brave!* As to yourself, you will soon be going to the government schools, and learning to be a good citizen of our *belle France*."

The boy drew himself up proudly.

"I am a good citizen now!" he said. "Mere Angeli-que and Soeur Marguerite, they teach us to love our country, to respect its laws. What more will you have, Monsieur? As to your government school," added the boy, "I know nothing of it."

Other children had come up and were listening with wide-opened eyes. Vague rumors of trouble at the convent were already rife.

The gendarme shrugged his shoulders.

"I am not here to answer questions," he said; "but to do as the government tells me, and that is to eject the nuns and send them about their business. Now run home, all of you."

He half drew his sword as he spoke, looking very fierce. With one accord the children fled.

"A good move, Gaston," said a voice on the other side of the iron gates. "If the nuns don't give way soon and unlock the doors, we will have you up, with that look and voice, to frighten them."

"*Helas!*" said Gaston, removing his helmet and mopping his head. "It has been tough work, those children."

Meanwhile Felix had run down the road that bordered the convent grounds, his brave little heart in a tumult of bewildered pain and anger. His beloved Sisters going away, and meanwhile guarded and threatened by those rude soldiers!

"Oh," thought the child, "if only *mon pere* was at home, it would be all right!"

The other children had gone on ahead, but Felix stood still. He glanced up at the high brick wall, above which appeared the chimneys and red tiled roofs of the convent building. No one was in sight, and suddenly an idea came to him. A large tree grew close to the brick wall, and seemed to invite ascent. Quickly the boy began to climb. In five minutes he was on top of the wall, looking with clear, eager brown eyes into the garden that spread out before him.

Yes, there was a sentry marching along in front of the convent door. Would he turn around by the side of the house, or keep in front, where, of course, he could see him (Felix), if he left the shelter of the overarching tree? The child paused to consider. Even if he cleared the lawn that lay between him and the house, could he get in the heavy oak door, which he rightly guessed was barred and bolted on the inside. It would take some time to make the portress understand it was a friend, not a foe; and meanwhile the sentry would be back, and he would be caught.

Felix knit his delicate brows; then, childlike, he suddenly clapped his small hands. His brown eyes had wandered to a small window near the ground—

one of many lighting the cellar, and one from which the glass was missing. The windows were so low and narrow, and were set in so deep an embrasure, that only a very small and determined boy could squeeze his way through. But Felix remembered that two days ago he and Henri had accomplished that very feat. Once inside, they had climbed up a ladder that led from the cellar, and had lifted a trapdoor in the kitchen, thereby startling old Soeur Odette almost out of her wits. Mere Angelique had chided the boys gently, and had given orders that a glazier be sent for to replace the glass. That was two days ago, and the hole was still visible; evidently rumors of trouble, or other things, had kept the glazier away.

A whistle sounded in the distance, and the sentry wheeled around, and in a moment turned the corner of the house.

At last the coast was clear! Quick as a flash, the child swung from a stout branch that jutted over the convent wall, and dropped down on the grass below. He was up in a second, and flying across the garden, his short legs stretched to their limit. Ah, thanks to the Sacred Heart, he reached the window safely! Squeezing his way through, his jacket caught on a nail, and for a moment the excited child thought it was the sentry pulling him back. There was no

time for skilful unfastening. Felix gave a tug; there was a sound of rending cloth, and he was free.

Making his way across the cellar to the ladder, he began to ascend, and presently was cautiously lifting the trapdoor, which, fortunately, was unfastened. No one was in the kitchen, and no sound disturbed the silence; the child closed the trapdoor and bolted it.

"They have forgotten," said Felix; "but the gendarme might come this way."

Wise, though not beyond his years, was the brave little fellow, who now began climbing the stairs, worn hollow by generations of youthful feet. Once in the broad upper hall, he did not hesitate. He rightly guessed that most of the nuns were in the chapel, but he would look first in his own particular class-room.

The eager brown hands turned the knob of the glass door, and he entered. A young nun, with her back to him, was putting away some books. Even in that hour of agony and uncertainty the trained discipline of years was not relaxed.

"Soeur Marguerite!" exclaimed Felix.

The nun turned, her pure proud face melting into love and tenderness.

"Felix—my little Felix! How came you here?"

But the boy had burst into tears, and, throwing his arms around her neck, could only sob:

"Soeur Marguerite, tell me—tell me!"

"Yes," she said soothingly, "I will tell you all, Felix. Do not cry, my child, God and the Blessed Mother have not abandoned us."

The calm voice and manner quieted Felix. Gradually he heard the whole story—telling at the same time how he had gained entrance to the convent.

As the young nun talked on, explaining in simple language what it all meant, there came into the boy's face an expression that the Sister noticed. In half an hour he seemed to have grown five years older.

"*Ma Soeur*," he said, "*mon pere* will be home tomorrow. I am sure he can make you free."

The young nun shook her head.

"No, my child," she replied, "your father can do nothing. The wisest, the best, the holiest men in France are powerless to check this evil. There is no doubt we must go."

"Where to?" asked Felix.

For a moment the nun seemed on the point of breaking down.

"I do not know," she answered. "That is what we are considering now, before we let the soldiers in. God will show us the way."

In the child's mind had come a sudden thought, born of his love and hope.

"I must go, *ma Soeur*," he said. "I can do nothing here, Perhaps I can help you outside."

Soeur Marguerite smiled as she looked down at the eager, sparkling little face; then anxiety for him superseded other thoughts.

"Can you get back to the road safely, Felix?" she asked.

"Trust me, Soeur Marguerite!" he answered. "Those tall gendarmes are stupid fellows. They will not catch Felix."

One regretful glance the boy gave around the cheerful, sunshiny room ere he left. There was the desk that he had shared with Henri; the little space in one corner where they had both carved their names; the statue of the Madonna, surrounded by pots of blooming flowers, between the two tall south windows; the crucifix on the wall over Soeur Marguerite's desk—all the loved and familiar objects that he was never to see again. No wonder the lad's heart was near to breaking.

Soeur Marguerite accompanied him to the trap-door, and then, through the lattice of an upper window, saw him get safely across the garden and swing himself up in the tree. She turned from the window with a sigh of relief; then, closing the door of the deserted class-room, made her way to the chapel.

Meanwhile Felix was running down the road

that led away from the convent and the town.

"I am glad I did not have to pass the gate again," he thought.

On and on sped the eager, flying little feet. The idea that had come to him while Soeur Marguerite talked and taken definite shape in his mind. As his father was away, he would go and see his *parrain*, the old Duc de la F.

"He is rich and powerful," thought the boy: "he can help the nuns."

## II.

For a mile Felix alternately ran and walked, past peasants and country carts, until he paused for a moment, breathless, in sight of a magnificent chateau that dominated the valley of the Loire. It was a long walk across the park, one of the largest in the west of France; but the boy was young and strong and upheld by a love that would have lent wings to the most tired feet. At last he was close to the chateau and its spacious courtyard, tower and wings; he had crossed the bridge over the moat, and was ringing for admission at the great central door.

Large as the chateau and park were, they were thoroughly familiar to Felix, who had spent days, and even weeks, there with his godfather. Every man on the place knew and loved the boy, though it



was the first time he had come there alone. So when the major-domo threw open the door, he uttered an exclamation of surprise and welcome, as if to prove that the stiffest etiquette could well be unbent for Felix.

The little fellow pulled off his cap as he entered the grand hall.

"I want to see Monsieur le Duc Pierre," he said. "Tell him it is a matter of life and death."

Pierre departed, half amused, half impressed by the child's choice of words; and Felix was left alone in a hall that was filled with priceless tapestries and wonderful old furniture and panellings. Examples of the old masters, heirlooms in the family for generations, hung on the walls. Young as Felix was, he knew that this chateau, designed by the same architect that built the Castle of Chenonceaux and the Tuileries, was one of the most celebrated in France.

Presently Pierre returned.

"Monsieur le Duc wishes you to come to him in his study," he said.

Quickly Felix ascended the grand stairway. A few seconds later he was knocking on the door of his godfather's private study; and in answer to the expected "*Entrez!*" he pushed open the door and advanced into the room.

Before him stood a tall, stately old man, past sixty.

A fine type of the grand seignior of the old school, a member of the Institute of France, and a Legitimist and devoted adherent of the late Comte de Chambord, the Duc de la F. had all the kindness, simplicity and absence of affectation or hauteur which characterize the finest of the old French nobles.

He advanced with outstretched hands.

"Felix, my little Felix, you are welcome! But what brings you here so early and alone? Surely it is the hour for school and study."

"*O mon parrain, les Soeurs!*" And then seated on his godfather's knee, in eager, rapid, at times almost incoherent words, the child told the old Duc all his experiences of the morning; winding up by saying that he had come to him, the Duc, as all-powerful to right this great wrong.

The old noble had been stroking the child's hair, occasionally helping him out by a word here, a question there. Now he put him gently down, and began pacing up and down the room, his fine old face showing lines of pain.

Felix stood still and waited. Monsieur le Duc would surely find a way.

"My child," said his godfather, at last stopping in his walk, and taking a chair and drawing Felix to him as he spoke—"my child, I am powerless as to this cruel decree that has swept over the length and

breadth of France. It is not here only, Felix: it is everywhere. Not even the Pope himself can stem the flood. If he can do nothing, my boy, how can I?"

"*O mon parrain*, if no one can help the poor Sisters, what will they do? They will not have bread to eat."

And at the thought of his beloved Soeur Marguerite starving perhaps, the child's overwrought courage broke down for the second time that morning. Only for a moment, however. He could not help Soeur Marguerite, he thought, unless he was brave.

"Felix," said the Duc, "I did not know till you came here that this trouble was at our very door. We can not keep the nuns with us; but I can help them in other ways, and will do so at once. As to the rest, my boy, so many prayers, so many tears, so many vigils before the Blessed Sacrament, not only in what is left of Catholic France, but all over the world, must some day bear fruit."

"Yes, *mon parrain!*" replied Felix, who began to feel strangely comforted.

"And now, my little Felix," said the old man, "you had better run home. Your mother must long ere this have heard of the closing of the convent, and she will be looking for you. For myself, my boy, I will go to the nuns this afternoon and do my best to see them. If the government will not allow me

admission, I will find other ways of communicating with them."

Hand in hand, the old Duc and the boy passed downstairs to where Pierre, splendid and erect, waited to open the door. The Duc's eyes were moist as he watched the beloved little figure flying across the lawn. The child had stirred the inmost depths of one of the noblest hearts in France.

"A fine boy, Monsieur le Duc!" said Pierre, who still held the door open, his master not having moved from the spot. Pierre spoke with the privilege of an old retainer.

"A noble boy indeed, Pierre!" observed the Duc. "Would to God we had many more such growing up to meet our country's need!"

Little thought Felix of the golden opinions he had won that day. The most loyal to duty are ever the simplest—the last to see their own glorious light.

\* \* \* \* \*

Felix had traversed half a mile on his homeward way when suddenly his quick ear was arrested by a familiar sound.

"Soldiers!" said the boy. "And coming this way from Nantes!" He listened, and the tread of marching feet came nearer. "Are they good soldiers or bad ones?" thought Felix, in whose mind there had

already begun to be a distinction. "If they are bad soldiers going to try to drive the Sisters out, I had better hide."

The child scrambled up a bank near by, and soon was safely hid behind a century-old tree, one of many that bordered the road. Here he could see without being seen; and presently, far down the road, he made out a column of infantry, the uniforms gorgeous in the midday sun, which also flashed on the helmets and sabers, until the child's eyes were dazzled by the glare and glitter.

Just ahead of the little column marched a soldierly-looking officer who was somewhat hidden from view, as the men drew nearer, by the dust raised by a passing country cart. Now they were almost on a line with the smooth, grassy bank, at the top of which the boy stood—eager, interested—when suddenly both officer and men came to an abrupt halt. Down the bank ran a sturdy little figure in a torn coat, arms waving, legs flying, his cap in one hand, and halted not till he had thrown himself with utter, childlike abandon on the tall officer.

*"Mon pere!"*

"Felix!"

And then the father's first question was the same as the old Duc's.

"Why are you not in school, my boy?"

"*O mon pere*, there is no school! I was sure when I saw you that you were coming to help the poor nuns; and now that you are here I am so happy!"

"Speak, Felix," said Captain de Valle. "What does it all mean? I have heard nothing about the nuns. I received a telephone message this morning at Nantes from my commander, telling me there was trouble in my native town, and to come at once with my regiment to quell it and restore order. What trouble is there, my boy."

But Felix had started back, his face flushed, his eyes shining.

"*Mon pere*," he said, "the General has sent for you to drive the nuns out—I know it; but, *O mon pere*, you will not do it!"

Captain de Valle's brow grew dark. He turned to his company of infantry.

"Go up the road, my men," he said, "and wait for me under that old elm. We will resume our march in a few moments."

The men moved forward in regular order. When they were out of earshot the Captain turned to his little son.

"Tell me all, Felix," he said.

And Felix told everything, while the father listened without a word. So it was for this he had been sent; to drive forth defenceless women from the cloister

at the point of the sword—his sword which he had pledged to the honor and glory of France! Oh, the shame of it!

When at last the boy came to the end of his story, he looked wistfully up into the dark face opposite him.

"You will not do it, *mon pere*?"

"Never, my boy,—never!"

"But, *O mon pere*," said little Felix, "your *parole d'honneur*, you have given it for *la France, la patrie, la gloire*!"

De Valle drew himself up proudly, and touched his shining sword with his hand.

"My *parole d'honneur*," he said—"yes, to defend France, but never to drive out God from my beloved *patrie*. To Him, Felix, belongs our highest *parole d'honneur*. I will render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, to God the things that are God's.

"*O mon pere*," said the child, "I adore you!"

\* \* \* \* \*

"And so, Captain de Valle, you refuse to obey your orders?"

"*Monsieur le General*, you sent a hurry call for me to quell an insurrection. I arrive and find no insurrection—only a convent full of defenceless women, who by every law, civil, and religious are entitled to

remain where they are, unmolested. I refuse absolutely and finally to be any party to driving them forth."

The General's lip curled with a sneer.

"We have heard many reports of you, Captain de Valle. Your want of loyalty to the government has long been suspected, and has now become a certainty. Are you aware that your insubordination will land you in prison?"

"Monsieur," said de Valle, proudly, "no honest man can question my loyalty to my country. I would shed my lifeblood for France on the battlefield, or in any cause where right cried aloud to me for succor. But I will not obey an infidel government when it goes beyond its right. I will not be the tool of the Grand Orient, whose spies I have known for some time have been watching me."

"You may go, Captain de Valle!" said the General.

\* \* \* \* \*

"It means ruin, my Julie!" said de Valle, quietly; "and for you, I fear, suffering and privation."

Madame de Valle smiled proudly through her tears.

"Come what will," she said, "I am ready. I would rather be the mother of such a son, the wife of such a man, than to see you President of France."



In his chateau, the old Duc knelt alone in the magnificent chapel where countless generations of his name had prayed before him.

"*O mon Dieu*," he exclaimed, "manifest Thy power and come! A few more men like de Valle, a few more boys like Felix, and this demon of infidelity would flee as the morning mist. Then would the power of the Grand Orient be broken; then would our beloved France be saved!"

## THE WATERS OF TREMBLING.

### I.

You ask me about the Waters of Trembling, senior. It happened thirty years ago. Not here; but over yonder, high up on the summit of the Guadalupe Canyon.

I am ninety years old now, senior, and my work is done. Morning and evening I sit here in the warm sunshine in front of my little adobe cabana and dream my dreams of the past; for my life has been wonderful and varied, senior, but no tale I have told, or could tell you, is more soul-stirring and strange than that which recounts the coming and going of the Waters of Trembling.

It was one spring day when Nature had risen from the short winter sleep of this country to burst out into one tender, delicate bloom, when the soft, feathery white of the fruit trees vied with the tender green of bush and tree, while under foot the warm brown earth took on a deeper tint, and the brilliant green lizards, and birds of scarlet and blue, made the whole land seem awake and instinct with color and life, that a new interest came to me.

For then it was that he came over the mountains one day—the master whom I served as house-man and body-man for a year; and here my story begins, senor.

I was working then at some carpentering, and perched high on the roof of Padre Paul's cabana I laid the white shingles in long, even lengths, and as I worked I sang.

Off in the distance the blue hills stood out clear and distinct, while the river that ran lazily over its rocky bed sparkled in the brilliant midday sun. A boat darted out from under the shade of a tall live oak that was overrun with long, trailing vines, and in the boat was a single occupant, a man. He ran his boat up on the rough, rocky shore, and springing out, commenced walking up the wide brown road toward me. I was not so busy but that I could mark him well as he drew nearer. A little above medium height he was, well-knit, athletic and graceful, with a poise of the head and a way of holding himself that might have marked him as a king. As he drew nearer I saw that he was dark, almost like a Spaniard. His loose shirt of grey flannel allowed the free carriage of his limbs, and his hat of soft grey felt was folded over and carried in one hand. The wind from the river lifted the brown hair from his forehead, and the blue sky made a silhouette for his noble head and

fine profile. A face to love, senor, and to think you could believe in and trust—a face that seemed to mirror a past life of goodness and purity. Alas! Alas!

He halted when he drew near to me and glanced up with a friendly smile.

"I have come down the Guadalupe and through the canyon in my boat," he said, "and now I would fain make my abode here for a while. I want a house to myself and a man to work for me. Can you direct me where to go?"

I doffed my sombrero. There was that in the full, sonorous voice of the speaker that attracted me like a magnet.

"If you wish a man, senor," I answered, "I am at your service. I am sixty years old, but well and strong, and I have lived many times with the American senors and know their ways. I can cook and work for you; but about a house, senor, there is none in the village, none to be had anywhere near here, except the large adobe cabana way up in the canyon, near the Waters of Trembling."

He drew nearer and looked interested. "Your name?" he said.

"Santos Trego, senor."

"You can give me good references?"

"Si, senor, Padre Paul has known me forty years,

and Herr Offer, who keeps the store, knew me first twenty years ago. They will both answer for me."

"That will do," he said. "And now how many inhabitants has this place? You seem to be the sole and only resident. As I came down the river it might have been a country of the dead."

"It is just after the noon hour, señor," I answered, "when every one is taking a siesta. You find me working because Padre Paul is in a hurry to have his house roofed over."

"Ah!" he said, "And what may be the number of inhabitants who are now asleep?"

"Fifty," I answered.

"Upon my soul," he said. "And I, I suppose, will make the fifty-first. This place will suit me excellently well, my good Santos. I will not have to drift back to the Garden of Eden for solitude. And now about a house. The thought of that adobe at the top of your stupendous canyon fascinates me. I will go up and look at it if you will go with me; but what means of conveyance will we employ?"

"Burros, señor. It is too far to walk, and the path is only safe with the burros."

"So much the better. Let us start at once. Can you hire burros, and immediately? Well, then, take this money, and come back as quickly as you can. I will wait here."

But I hesitated. I had still one more row of shingles to lay for Padre Paul.

He always seemed to read your thoughts, this man, and he understood without my having said a word.

"Ah!" he said, "I see. Then I will go on to that ramshackle building, which I suppose is your hotel or inn, and you can finish your roof and join me there. Will that do?"

"Si, si, senor," I answered.

In twenty minutes my work was done, and putting my tools and what was left of the shingles in the shed off Padre Paul's kitchen, I ran down the road and pushed open the door of Offer's tavern.

A knot of men, German and English ranchers, a few native Americans, and some Mexicans and half-breeds were gathered around the newcomer, who, leaning over the bar, was sipping beer from a tall glass.

If he liked solitude he was doing his best to attract company by talking, and his conversation, as I soon discovered, was always fascinating. As I entered he drained the glass to the dregs, then turned to me.

"It is the time and the hour, Santos," he said. "Herr Offer will furnish the mules and we will start at once. It is a long ride they tell me, and we will return here for to-night—after that, the Waters of Trembling, or the deluge."

In five minutes I had led two burros up to the door of the tavern, and mounting quickly, we rode through the village and then along the banks of the river until we struck the trail leading across the mountains bordering the canyon.

\* \* \* \* \*

"If I had searched the world over," said the senor, "I could not have found a spot more to my taste."

We were standing on the plateau in front of the adobe cabana, and as he spoke my eyes swept the western horizon in one fleeting glance.

To our right, range on range, stretched the Guadalupe hills, while the romantic river of the same name ran like a silver thread through fair valley and wide plain. Everywhere the vast tracts of arable ranch lands were planted with cotton or grain, or else great herds of cattle roamed near the river, some of them standing knee deep in its cooling waters. We were on top of the canyon. Below us, the stupendous cliff on which we stood was a sheer descent to the road below, which ran through a forest of trees to the river. Tradition had it that this road was once a branch of the Guadalupe River; but that was before my day, senor.

You ask what it looked like near where we were standing? Ah! now I come to the strange part of

my story, for I must tell you about the Waters of Trembling.

On the very summit of the canyon was a deep well, or such it seemed to be, about fifteen feet in diameter. Originally it had been to all appearances a bottomless hole in the rock, until one night there was a fierce tropical storm. There were two brothers who inhabited the adobe on top of the canyon, and who had planted vast vineyards of grapes on the east slope of the hill, from which they made the sweet wine that they sold in the city; but after that night they were never seen again. Instead, the once empty hole was found to be almost filled with water, and because this water was never still, not even in the calmest weather, but constantly ruffled and agitated, it was named the Waters of Trembling.

The grape-vines withered and dried up, and there were those who said that at times the water in the well was blood-red; so the place acquired an evil name and was shunned by Mexicans and Americans alike, and the adobe cottage had been empty for twenty years when the senor went up the mountain to see it.

It was well and stoutly built, this adobe, and its situation was peculiar, for it stood on a broad ledge just twenty-five feet below the summit of the canyon where was the Well of Trembling Waters. This



rocky ledge was covered with earth and moss, and was about sixty feet wide, and fifty feet deep. The cabana was built with its back to the wall of rock, which rose in serrated ridges to the top of the canyon. On the other three sides of the plateau there was a sheer descent of three hundred feet to the valley below. To reach the plateau you had to climb down a steep, rocky path from the summit of the canyon. No eagle's nest could have been in a more wild and lonely spot than was this adobe cabana of four rooms, and an outside shed, where I was destined to live for a year. For, yes, the senor was so mightily pleased with it that he said he would move in as soon as it could be made habitable.

"Open all the windows, Santos," he said, "let in the sun and air. I will send to San Antonio for furniture and furnishings, and for seeds and plants, and we will make this wilderness bloom like the Garden of Allah. With solitude and my books I will get as near happiness as this rude world will permit. Only two things in this world are sure, Santos, and they are sorrow and death."

Now I was old even then, senor—sixty years—but strong and sound as in my youth, and I liked it not that one so young—I found afterward he was thirty-six years old—should talk in such a gloomy strain. Over in the west the sun was sinking mag-

nificently behind the purple hills and all the air was warm and drowsy with the sweetness that its warmth and light had shed over the land. I know little, senor, of the great discoveries of science, but I once heard Padre Paul say, "As I move about in the sunshine I feel in the midst of immortal things," and so it has ever seemed to me, senor. That great ball of fire that we call the sun I believe to be heaven, the abode of Eternal Light; for look you, senor, how this earth and all the other heavenly bodies depend on it, and are warmed by it, and draw their very life from it. Sometimes at night when I have been out on the plains, and lying there, wrapped up in my blanket, have studied the vast dome of the heavens, I have dreamed strange dreams. Methought all these vast planets revolving in space must be the waiting-places of the dead and gone spirits who have lived on earth. Mercury, the planet nearest the sun, is, I doubt not, the abode of the saints and martyrs, and so on, in the order of merit, till we come to mighty Neptune, the farthest from the sun by a distance of two billion seven hundred and ninety-two millions of miles, and here, so I take it, are the lost and wandering souls, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

I told this dream of mine later to my new master and he listened without any laughter in his eyes.

"A strange idea, Santos," he said, "and yet—

well—there may be more in it than we think. There have been nations who will only pray when they face the sun, almost as if some divine instinct had whispered to them that behind its radiance is God."

My tale grows long, senor, and I am wandering far afield, but I see it all again, that golden afternoon when I took service with the sad, mysterious senor, whom I learned to love so well.

There was a little more talk between us, and then we remounted our burros and rode down the mountain trail to the village below.

In two weeks from that day we were settled in our little home above the Guadalupe Canyon.

## II.

It was a month later and the summer days, which were warm down in the valley and on the plains, were still cool on top of our mountain. Many times the senor said how much he enjoyed the solitude and repose of our rocky fastness; for he never stirred from home save to take short walks. Three times a week on my burro I went down the trail to buy supplies and get the senor's mail; but, except for his letters, he took no interest in the outside world.

I soon found he was a passionate lover of books. At great trouble and expense he had had a fine library taken up to his new home, and his taste and ingenuity

had worked a miracle of transformation in the cabana both inside and out. One room was his bed-room; this was like a monk's cell, with a small iron bed and no adornment save a large crucifix on the wall. Opening out of this was a large room that he called the "living room." On improvised book shelves that I had put up under his direction were his books, and on the square oak table in the centre of the room were magazines and papers in profusion. Some easy chairs and a long low lounge completed the furnishings. There was a charm about this room, senior, impossible to describe, especially when the western sun flooded it with light.

Beyond this room was a wide passage that opened into the kitchen, and beyond that was my own small bedroom, which the master saw was comfortably furnished.

All across the front of the house was a wide gallery shaded by an awning, and here were easy chairs and a hammock. The beautiful moon vine which grew across one side of the gallery in a riotous tangle filled all the air at night with its fragrant sweetness, and the plateau in front of the cabana, to the very edge of the cliff, was brilliant with flowers, which the master himself tended each day with loving care. The flowers and their scent were his passion, next to his books.

He talked to me a great deal during the long summer evenings when my work was done, and little by little I gathered that there was some dark mystery in his life, some past that he had turned his back on forever.

"I have been a wicked man, Santos," he said one day, and then looking at me, he laughed. "Ah!" he said, "I see you don't believe it. Nevertheless, so it is. I am half-devil and half-saint; you may be thankful you are not made up of such warring elements, my good Santos, for in the long run the devil is apt to win."

"The Cross of Calvary stands above the world, senior," I said.

"It stands too high for some of us to reach," he answered; "I sometimes think when God made us, He should not have made us what we are."

I thought a moment, and then made reply.

"The great battles of the world have never been easily won, senior. Napoleon, Charlemagne, Julius Caesar, Alexander—all had to fight hard, and fight long, to win their earthly triumphs. Why, then, should a man's moral battles be easily won?"

"Where did you learn so much?" he asked, looking amused.

"The Franciscan Fathers taught me to read, senior," I answered, "and the different American

senors I have worked for always lent me books."

"Well," he said, "here are books in plenty. You can browse among them at your will. If you want prose, here is Walter Pater, the divine, and Landor's 'Imaginary Conversations,' and Thomas de Quincy; or if you like poetry, read the immortal Homer, and Robert Browning; or perhaps you would like better Francis Thompson, or Lionel Johnson, or else, perchance, Coventry Patmore. Though now I come to think of it, my good Santos, I fear such browsing would be too deep for you. For myself I find in them some of my philosophy of life."

And so he would talk on, the senior; and often his conversation was as far removed from my understanding as was the distance from the lowest depths of the Waters of Trembling to its rippled surface.

Sometimes we would sit out on the flower-decked plateau in front of the cabana and the twilight would deepen, and presently over the crest of the cliff behind the adobe the evening star would appear in all its splendor, throwing out a flash and sparkle of iridescent light that made all the other stars pale in comparison; the vast canyon seemed cradled in the encircling arms of the dusky night, and the scent of earth and flowers rose and floated on the breeze, charged with an amber sweetness that seemed like perfumed incense; and then the master would take

his violin and play until you thought a human soul was uttering its sob of pain—strange, weird and beautiful sounds, filled with some passionate note of regret.

And so the days and the months passed. Christmas came and went, the New Year dawned, another spring arrived; and then—when I had lived with the senor nearly a year—there came a diversion.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was one spring morning like that day when I first saw the senor, when all Nature was awakening with renewed and unconquered life. Inside the cabana the master still slept; but I was up early, and having made the fire and put the kettle on to boil, I went out in the garden to pick some early spring flowers to put on the breakfast table, and as I bent over the flower-bed I heard a sound that made me turn my head.

The eastern sun had not yet appeared over the cliff; but its beams sent a golden glow all across the sky, and there, standing above the cabana on the extreme edge of the cliff, silhouetted against the warm radiance of the eastern horizon, was the tall figure of a boy about fifteen, and as I looked my wonder grew, for indeed he was fair and beautiful. Even as I turned and was about to speak, he seemed

to catch sight of the steps in the rock that led down to our plateau; for, swift and sure-footed as a young deer, he began flying down the steep descent. Was he of mortal ken, or was this the winged Mercury, or, perchance, Endymion, the youthful hunter from Mount Latmos?

In a moment he was by my side. No spirit this, no hero of mythology, but pure flesh and blood, instinct with health and life. The laughing blue eyes were smiling into mine and a voice like a flute greeted me.

"Upon my word," he said, "this is the most wonderful place. I left W—— this morning at five o'clock, and took the trail over the mountain to F——; but just below here my burro went lame, and I had to lead him up the rest of the way. What to do was a problem, when, lo! I beheld smoke ascending from below the cliff, and walking forward to investigate, I found this enchanted spot—this Garden of Allah! I'm not sure even now but that I am dreaming!"

"No dream, senor," I answered. "My master took this poor adobe, and made it to look as you see, and I, Santos, work for him."

The boy's clear eyes moved quickly from one spot to another, and I saw that the charm of our little corner of the great world had laid hold of him, as it had enthralled me.



"It's glorious," he said, "and your master, Santos where his he?"

As if in answer to the question, the house door opened and the master emerged, a cool figure all in white.

Quickly and with simple grace the boy stepped forward.

"I claim your hospitality, sir," he said. "Your man, Santos, has just heard my tale." And then he proceeded to repeat what he had just told me. So strange it was! For the master seemed turned to stone. He neither moved nor spoke; but gazed at the frank, open face of the boy almost with horror.

The warm air seemed to grow chill; the youth paused in his speech, hesitated and drew back—then half-turned to me.

"If you can lend me a fresh burro—" he began. Then, with mighty effort, the senor seemed to recover himself and stepped forward.

"Pardon me," he said—and now he was smiling, his most winning and fascinating smile—"I was so taken by surprise; but you are welcome, most welcome. Santos is skilled in doctoring all live stock; he will take care of your burro, and you must stay with us a few days ere you proceed on your way."

I remember that morning meal, senor; the master was the gayest of the gay, so witty, he was so bril-

liant; as to the boy, I soon found he had a rare mind, and that he had travelled and seen the world. His sensibilities were fine and delicate, not like the clods of boys I had known, whose minds soared but little way above the earth, and for whom cock fights and craps made a world.

"If you had a piano," said the boy, "I would play for you."

"You love music?" asked the master.

And then I moved into the kitchen and lost the answer, but presently, when they went out on the gallery, I heard the youth singing in a way that left no doubt of his musical gifts.

The three days passed into a week. The young senor's burro had been quite seriously lamed; but he seemed well contented to stay, and meanwhile our quiet life was completely metamorphosed. The master came out of his solitude and rode over the mountain and through the canyon with his guest, the boy mounted on my own burro; and then the day came when his own animal was well, and on the morrow he would depart, for his mother, he said, was waiting for him in San Antonio. He must ride to T——, where he would take the train southward.

That night I had retired early, and I must have slept for four or five hours when I awoke with a start, conscious of some oppressive stillness in the air—

some whispering, as if the blessed saints had spoken to me in my sleep of coming evil.

Hastily I arose and slipped on my clothes, and so out of the kitchen door I walked and around the side of the low, wide cabana, and somehow it was no surprise to see the master walking up and down the plateau, and that there was in the carriage of his proud head, the quick, impatient swing of his walk, that told me I saw before me a man fighting one of the decisive battles of life. I hesitated—should I advance or retreat? Before I could decide the master had seen me, and pausing in his rapid walk, called me.

His voice was strained, but not unkind. I had had many proofs of his growing attachment for me, and I knew I could venture on a freedom of speech with him that others might not take.

“Have you come out to enjoy the moon, Santos?” he said. “It is full moon, and your poetical soul can well revel in such a scene.”

I had no mind to talk of moonlight and starlight with a human soul before me wrestling with I knew not what, so I walked up to him.

“You are in trouble, senor?”

There was no veiling it. It was in his eyes and had been in his voice. He laid a hand on my shoulder

“For a week I have lived a hell on earth, Santos,”

he said. "That boy! he has twined himself round and round my heart. I love him as I never thought I could love again. I look in his clear eyes and see my own lost and innocent youth. He knows the world, and yet he is singularly pure."

I bowed my head but did not speak.

"I told you I had a dark and mysterious past, Santos," continued the master; "that the spirit of evil and the spirit of light warred within me. To-night all the legions of hell are let loose; for that boy recalls a part of myself I would fain forget—a past that the spirit of light tells me must be trampled on now and forever."

I looked at the senor's pale face and bowed head. Oh, the anguish and despair in his voice!

"God is good, senor," was all I could say.

"It is a straw to a drowning man, Santos," he said. "Flesh and blood are strong, and then when we seem about to yield to temptations, He sends an angel of deliverance. Stay here with me, Santos."

Back and forth we walked, master and man. I, the poor Mexican servant, and he with his mighty intellect, fit to sit down with the great ones of earth; but in sorrow it is the heart and not the mind; and the heart in me went out to meet this mysterious, unknown anguish in the senor.

The moon sank to rest, and the stars paled. A

chill breeze sprang up, and for a moment I went within, and came back with a warm blanket to wrap around the master. He was shivering then like a child.

Presently intense darkness descended on us; but still I did not propose going indoors. Some instinct told me that such was not his wish.

And then—all along the horizon behind the cabana came a faint glimmer of light: brighter and brighter it grew, and what was first a delicate pearl became a rosy flush and then deep crimson. A sweet, fresh breeze blew over the land; so must sin and sorrow flee before the Eternal Light. The master's pale face was drawn and haggard, his eyes were sunk in his head. But as he turned to me I knew he had lost forever that reckless, dare-devil spirit which had so often looked out on me from his dark eyes, marring their otherwise clear depths.

"I am very weary," he said. "I would fain rest now for a while."

Together we went in the house, passing softly through the living-room, where slept the boy on the lounge. One arm was flung back above his head, the other hung carelessly over the side of his bed. I have said he was beautiful, with a fair, radiant, boyish beauty in which was much strength; and as I glanced at him in passing and marked the serene

purity of his brow, the warm flush of sleep on his cheeks, I thought I had never seen a more lovable face in one so young.

One look the master gave—a grave, sad look—then he entered his own room and closed and locked the door.

As for me, I had no desire to sleep. Leaving the door between the living-room and kitchen open, I busied myself at my morning tasks, and when three hours later, the master emerged from his room, our guest had no suspicion of that all-night conflict on the plateau that now shone so fair under a cloudless, blue sky.

The master's farewell was quiet and manly, that of the youth was touched with the magic of a dawning hero-worship for the senor.

"I will come again," he said. The boyish voice was as music to my old ears, and long I watched him down the left slope of the canyon, till just at the bend in the mountain trail, he turned and waved his cap for one last farewell.

### III.

I wish my story could come to an end now, senor; but alas! my tale is not yet told.

As I turned down the rocky descent that led to the plateau below, the sun went behind a heavy cloud

and simultaneously a chill wind blew across the canyon. I glanced at the sky. Yes, undoubtedly, a storm was coming; but it might blow for two days before the rain came. I was used to the spring rains and freshets of our Southern climates; they usually lasted three days, during which the river would become very much swollen, and often overflow its banks. Once, ten years earlier, there had been a tremendous storm that turned into a flood, when the Padre Paul, and his ward, little Conchita, had nearly lost their lives; but storms of such magnitude were rare.

The master was very quiet that day and kept indoors, as the weather was too chill and bleak to sit on the gallery or plateau. As for me, I busied myself with my usual tasks.

It was about five o'clock, and I had commenced my preparations for the evening meal, and was thinking how silent the house was without the sound of the boyish voice that had enlivened it for over a week, when a sudden exclamation from the living-room startled me. Something in the tone of the senor's voice showed that there was trouble, so I was in the room in an instant. What had happened?

He stood near the lounge, which he had pulled partly away from the wall, in his hand a book, on his face an expression that held me rooted to the spot.

"Santos," he said slowly, and every word was an effort, "this book must belong to the boy."

I drew nearer. Only a book! Then I found my tongue.

"Yes," I said. "It is the young senor's book. He was reading it one afternoon when you were asleep. He told me it belonged to his mother and that he was so fond of it he had brought it with him on his journey to W——. He told me his mother loved it as much as he did."

I was not prepared for the effect of these words on the senor; the book fell from his hands.

"His mother!" he said. "His mother! Oh! my boy—my son!"

His voice was harsh, as of one who controlled himself by a mighty effort. In utter bewilderment I picked up the book. On the fly-leaf was written: "Mary from Philip," and the date sixteen years ago. I turned the leaves to the title-page; but here was no solution. The book was "Green Fire," by Fiona Macleod, a name I had never heard.

Then the master came toward me.

"Santos," he said, "it is time I explained myself. That night on the plateau I suspected this boy was my son. Something he had said the evening before made me feel almost certain of it. The conflict in my mind was, whether I should or should not follow



the matter to a conclusion and make sure. My final decision that night was that I was not yet worthy to seek my wife again; but this book, and what you tell me, shows me I can go to her now without fear.

"I found this book on the floor," he continued: "the boy must have dropped it and forgotten it. When I opened it, all the past came back to me—that past I can never forget."

As he spoke he took the book from my hand and opened it.

"There are words here," he said, "that will tell you my past, and my inward thoughts as nothing else ever will."

Turning the pages, he found what he wanted and began to read. His beautiful voice had regained its natural tone.

" 'In heart and brain that old world lived anew. All that was fair and tragically beautiful was forever undergoing in his mind a marvellous transformation—a magical resurrection rather, wherein what was remote and bygone, and crowned with oblivious dust, became alive again with intense and beautiful life.' "

And so it was, senior. The past to him was as real as the present. He lived in it, his own happier days, and among the men and women of bygone centuries. That it was, I think, which kept him

from ever feeling lonely in our isolated mountain fastness.

I remembered some words of his that I had heard him say one evening to the young senor, the boy whom I could hardly yet understand was his son.

"Life," he said, "is a human chess-board. Men and women come and go. But some of them become immortal, and some we learn to love excellently well. Out of the dim past there are figures that to me can never appear as dead and gone. I have read of them, and mused upon them, until I know and love each one."

"Who are they?" the young senor asked, and the master smiled as he made answer.

"A motley crew, my boy—Vittoria Colonna and Michael Angelo, Erasmus and Holbein, Blessed Thomas More and Queen Mary Tudor, Cardinal Newman and Savonarola, Andreas Hofer and Richard Jeffries, the most gorgeous Lady Blessington, and—oh, yes—Robert Browning, Walter Savage Landor and St. Philip Neri."

The boy threw up his hands and laughed.

"Oh!" he said, "what an uncomfortable time they would have if they were all to meet in one place!"

And the master had laughed, too; but I wander from my subject, senor. Sometimes the events of that night all mix in my brain like a kaleidoscope.

I am in the room again now with the master holding that fateful book in his hands, and outside the howling of the wind in the gathering dusk. With him thought and action were always simultaneous and rapid, and in a moment he spoke again.

"Santos," he said, "I have work for you to do. To-morrow, early, I want you to go to F—— and take the train to San Antonio. Go to the address I will give you, and take this ring and book to the boy and his mother. Ask them if I shall come to them." He drew a handsome signet ring from his finger as he spoke, and handed it to me.

"My wife will know that ring," he said, "and the boy? Well, I think he loves me already. Is was no chance brought him here."

We sat and talked some time longer. How proud I was that he had chosen me as his emissary. Soon there must be a happy ending to these years of sorrow.

\* \* \* \* \*

I was up at daybreak, and having prepared our morning meal, was ready to start by seven o'clock. The dear master walked with me a little way down the mountain trail, I on my burro, he on foot. "I trust you, Santos," he said. "I have had proof of your wisdom and good judgment, so I leave every-

thing to you." Then he bade me adieu, and at the same spot on the slope of the canyon where the boy had waved farewell to me, I also turned. The master stood motionless as a statue, his noble head outlined against the northern sky. So must I ever remember him, senor—a strong soul who had won good out of infinite evil and pain.

I reached San Antonio at two o'clock that afternoon, and went at once to the hotel the master had named, only to be told that the young senor and his mother had left for the North that morning.

What was to be done? In my disappointment and perplexity I considered—then my decision was made. They would reach St. Louis early the next morning, and I found it was their intention to stop there for two days and then proceed eastward. By starting for home at once I could reach the canyon at ten o'clock, and if the master said so, I could go on to W—— and send a telegram to St. Louis that would intercept them.

I hastened to the railroad station and caught a train for F——, which I reached at seven o'clock. Getting my burro from the hostelry, I started on my ride to the canyon.

The storm, which had been threatening for days, was now breaking over the country in all its fury. I had not ridden for an hour when I saw that there

was an unusual disturbance of the elements. The first part of my ride across the valley was comparatively easy, but at eight o'clock I turned out of the valley and entered on the long, narrow road through the wind-swept canyon. This passage, bounded on each side by high cliffs, acted as a regular conduit for the wind; the rain also now began to fall in torrents, and it was all I could do to keep my seat and guide my burro. I had still two miles through the canyon before I struck the mountain trail. At all times a steep and difficult ascent, it would now be ten times more so.

. But reach the master I must. The mere thought of him alone on the narrow plateau overhanging the mountain precipice spurred me to fresh effort.

On we rode, senor, but with a slowness that nearly drove me mad. Oh, for wings to fly across the intervening space! The patient burro did its best. And now at last we were at the foot of the steep mountain trail. Resolutely I turned the animal's head that way; slowly, step by step—and with every step a pause—we made our way up the mountain-side, through darkness indescribable and in the face of wind and rain that was like a tornado and a flood. Then, far off, I heard the rumbling of thunder. Another hour and we were half-way up the mountain, when a furious storm of thunder and lightning was

added to the already overcharged elements. I had so far proceeded with extreme caution, but now, blinded by a flash, I swerved and pulled my burro's head the wrong way; in a second he was down, and striking out wildly with the instinct of self-preservation, I grasped the friendly branch of a tree. Above the thunder of the elements I heard the burro go crashing down the mountainside. Only a miracle had preserved me from the same death, *senor*. For a moment I lay like one stunned, then I arose, strong in the determination to proceed; the rest of my journey must be made on foot. And so it was, *senor*. Most of the way groping on my knees, with torn garments that were drenched to the skin, and with bleeding hands and feet, I fought my way to the summit of the canyon. A flash of lightning showed me the straight, level path that led across from the spot where I was crouching on the ground to the edge of the cliff, one hundred feet distant, where was the path that led down to the *cabana*. To stand up in that wind was impossible; beside, the full force of it was behind me, and might blow me over the cliff if I tried to walk. I must continue, therefore, to creep. For full fifty feet I felt my way along the ground—and then simultaneously there was a crash of thunder overhead and a deep rumbling under foot. The earth seemed to rock like a gigantic

cradle, and there was a noise as if the whole mountain were crumbling to pieces.

Was it some peculiar action of the earthquake that caused the lightning which followed to continue, flash after flash, for fully two minutes? Sometimes, senior, even sixty seconds can be an eternity of time. In that vivid and blinding light, which lit up valley and canyon with an unearthly brightness, I beheld a magnificent sight. The Waters of Trembling had become the Waters of Destruction. In a vast column of dark water and silver spray they were thrown upward, thirty feet in the air; and I knew by the sound, that in their backward leap, they were falling down the cliff on our cabana. All danger to myself was forgotten. With a cry I arose to my feet and dashed forward. The master was there, under that avalanche of waters. Surely I heard his voice calling me above the storm.

The next moment the wind had taken me like a ball and lifted me off my feet—then I struck something, I knew not what, and all was oblivion.

\* \* \* \* \*

Did he escape, you ask, the master I loved so well, and would have died to save? Alas! no, senior. That terrible descent of the Waters of Trembling swept down on our plateau, bearing house and all in it over

the cliffs to the valley three hundred feet below. Thence its course led onward to the waters of the Guadalupe, which became a raging torrent for days to come. When the storm was over the Waters of Trembling had vanished. Thirty years ago senor, and they have never come back! If you climb the mountain you can look down in the empty crater that once held them.

And the dear master? Five miles down the river we found all that was mortal of him. We brought him to the church and Padre Paul sang the Requiem Mass; then we buried him on the hillside where all the breezes blow.

That is all, senor. I sent the ring and the book to his son, and his wife wrote me, and would have had me live with them, but I was too old to leave my own country that I love so well.

You think the title of the book strange, you say, and that both fire and water worked the master's destruction. Ah! senor, look not at it that way. I grant you he passed through them both—the fires of a sinful and worldly life—of temptations at last conquered; and after that the Waters of Trembling. But what says the sweet singer, David, in one of his psalms, senor?

“We passed through fire and water, and then Thou didst bring us forth into a wealthy place.”



## AZRAEL.

When he was born his father said: "Let him be called Azrael; for he has been indeed the Angel of death who has taken away my best beloved." Then the proud, unhappy man shut himself up with his grief, and time went by, until by brooding much on himself, and his own sorrows, the tender dew of pity and sympathy dried up in his heart.

The years also passed over little Azrael until he was six years old. An isolated babyhood grew into a lonely childhood. No companions were his. No one was even allowed to tell him he had had a mother.

"He will learn in time," the strange man said, "but let him live as long as possible without knowing he has a heart to love and a soul to suffer."

And so the little boy wandered through his father's vast estate, lived in splendid rooms, and was taught with great care; but no one ever caressed him or said "I love you," and often, he knew not why, his little heart was sad. His chief joy was his violin on which he could play with great skill, and sometimes he sang, but not often.

One day he was walking through the great hall of

his father's house when he saw an open door: here was a room into which he had never before penetrated. Very softly he entered, making his way across the rich velvet carpet, and past heavy tapestries, till he reached a corner of the room where some dazzling rays of light came through the half-closed blind, and here, just out of reach of the sun's rays, but illuminated by its soft reflection, was a full length portrait of a sweet and gracious figure, whose soft eyes looked down on the child, and the little boy looked and looked, and knew not that it was his mother.

How lovely she was! Her lips parted as if just about to speak, her slender girlish figure full of a tender appealing sweetness. Little Azrael stood very still, and as he gazed into the dark eyes, so like his own, a great joy welled up in his heart, and he said: "I will call her my own, my beautiful one."

So he took his little violin and played to her, as he never played before, and his father hearing him, sighed, and said; "Some day he will be famous, and he will suffer pain."

After that the little boy was happy. His lessons over, he would steal away into the silent drawing room, and curling himself up on the rug in front of the dear picture, he would play, until the shadows on the dawn outside deepened, and twilight descended

and he could no longer see the soft eyes looking down on him.

There came a day when Azrael felt ill; but he told no one, for he was a patient child who had never been questioned as to how he felt. Once more he came into the vast, silent room; and standing before the picture he began to play. The little hands that held the violin were hot and feverish, the great dark eyes were full of tears—suddenly the music halted and broke; the treasured violin fell almost noiselessly on the floor, and the child took a step forward with his arms outstretched.

“O my beautiful one!” he cried, “speak to me. I am so lonely. Speak to me, only once.”

The dear face smiled on him, but no sound came to relieve his eager little heart—and then he cast himself upon the floor and wept. After that followed many days when he lay tossing on his little bed, and great doctors and skilled nurses bent over him; for all too late the strange man found out he loved his only child.

It was toward evening on the twenty-first day of his illness, and the golden sun was setting in the West, when two majestic angel forms met outside his door, and paused.

“I am Azrael the Angel of death,” said one, “let

me enter first, for I come to bear away the child who was named for me."

"Not so," said the other, "I am Gabriel, the Angel of Revelation—the Father has bidden me come for him whom you seek."

So Azrael, the mighty one, spread his wings and flew away. The little child opened his eyes, and saw bending over him the great Archangel—tender, strong and beautiful. He looked into eyes full of divine compassion; and with a little sigh he yielded up his pure soul into the angelic keeping.

Then Gabriel folded the little one in his strong arms, and the child rested its head against his shoulder, for he knew neither pain nor sorrow now. Upward they flew—hundreds, thousands and millions of miles—on, on, through immeasurable space, till they came to the portals of the Eternal City—whose gates are as one pearl—standing ever open.

And the Angel put down the child, and hand in hand they entered, treading the streets of pure gold, and then the little child looked up in wonder and awe, for there, coming toward him, was his mother!

"O my beautiful one, it is you!" he cried, and then he held out his arms and ran to her; and the lovely shining figure stooped down and folded him in her arms, and—yes! it was no dream, he heard her cry:

"My child, my little Azrael, how I have loved and prayed for you."

He lay safe and happy in her arms, drinking in all that tender mother love that is deathless and eternal. By and by she put him down very tenderly and led him through paths strewn with flowers, till they came to a beautiful, majestic figure, and the young mother said to her: "Mother of Christ, I have found my little child," and little Azrael looked up and met a gaze full of tender compassion; for this mother, also, had loved and lost and found, her only son. Then they took him by each hand, and led him nearer and nearer to the light that is the glory of God, until they stood in front of the Mercy Seat; and on this throne sat One, who had said: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me."

And when the eyes of the glorious Christ turned on him, the little child became as wise as he was innocent and pure, and he knew his mother, and that love is divine and eternal.

And so joy came to the little heart that on earth had been so starved, for he had found his "Beautiful One," and they were safe in the bosom of God.

















LIBRARY  
OF THE  
MUSEUM  
OF  
COMPARATIVE ZOOLOGY  
AND  
ANATOMY  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY